The Castle of Truth
and Other
Revolutionary Tales

HERMYNIA ZUR MÜHLEN

Edited and translated by JACK ZIPES

The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales

ODDLY MODERN FAIRY TALES

Jack Zipes, *Series Editor*

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Illustrations by George Grosz, John Heartfield, Heinrich Vogeler, and Karl Holtz

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Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS vii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

Introduction: The Red Countess and Her Revolutionary Vision 1

A Note on the Illustrators 17

TALES

1. Three Tales from *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him* (*Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen*, 1921) 21

   The Coal's Story (*Was die Kohle erzählt*, 1921) 21

   The Matchbox's Story (*Was die Streichholzschachtel erzählt*, 1921) 26

   The Water Bottle's Story (*Was die Flasche erzählt*, 1921) 32

2. Why? (*Warum?*, 1922) 40

3. The Rose Bush (*Der Rosenstock*, 1922) 54

4. Ali, the Carpet Weaver (*Ali, der Teppichweber*, 1923) 64

5. The Glasses (*Die Brillen*, 1923) 75

6. The Servant (*Der Knecht*, 1923) 83

7. The Troublemakers (*Die Störenfriede*, 1923) 96

8. The Castle of Truth (*Das Schloß der Wahrheit*, 1924) 110

9. The Broom (*Der Besen*, 1924) 120
10. The Carriage Horse (*Der Droschkengaul*, 1924) 127
11. The Collaborator (*Die Bundesgenossin*, 1924) 136
12. The Miraculous Wall (*Die Wundermauer*, 1924) 141
13. The Monkeys and the Whip (*Die Affen und die Peitsche*, 1924) 151
14. The Fence (*Der Zaun*, 1924) 154
15. The Red Flag (*Die rote Fahne*, 1930) 161
16. The Crown of the King of Domnonée (1944) 173
17. The Story of the Wise Judge (1944) 179
BIBLIOGRAPHY 183

List of Illustrations

1. "The Coal's Story," George Grosz 24
2. "The Matchbox's Story," George Grosz 31
3. "The Water Bottle's Story," George Grosz 36
4. "Why?" Heinrich Vogeler 49
5. "The Rose Bush," Heinrich Vogeler 62
6. "Ali, the Carpet Weaver," John Heartfield 66
7. "The Glasses," Heinrich Vogeler 77
8. "The Servant," John Heartfield 91
9. "The Troublemakers," John Heartfield 104
10. "The Castle of Truth," Karl Holtz 112
11. "The Broom," Karl Holtz 124
12. "The Carriage Horse," Karl Holtz 130
13. "The Collaborator," Karl Holtz 137
14. "The Miraculous Wall," Karl Holtz 146
15. "The Monkeys and the Whip," Karl Holtz 152
16. "The Fence," Karl Holtz 156
17. "The Red Flag," Heinrich Vogeler 163

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The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales

■ Introduction

The Red Countess and Her Revolutionary Vision

> Intelligence, liveliness of mind, sensibility, taste, and charm have made her a truly good fairy. A stray dog, abandoned by its master, a poor devil without a penny to his name or a roof over his head, a lost soul—she takes them all equally under her wing. She has nothing in common with communist officials mechanically and bureaucratically working their eight-hour-day shifts. Although she has not yet lost her illusions about the Party leadership, she retains great independence of mind, and her horizons are in no way limited. . . . Everyone who understands that revolutionary art is not just phraseology, everyone who is on the look-out for a creative and joyful talent responds to the great literary gifts and the free spirit of Hermynia Zur Mühlen.
>
> —HENRI GUILBEAUX, *DIE WELTBÜHNE* (JULY 8, 1930)

Hermynia Zur Mühlen disobeyed all the rules of proper behavior that were part of her aristocratic upbringing in Austrian upper-class society. From childhood onward, she questioned these arbitrary social codes and rarely minced her words in an effort to find and speak the truth in the face of oppression and hypocrisy. Consequently, she betrayed her class and became one of the most outspoken and prolific left-wing authors of the early twentieth century, who sought to revolutionize both children and adults through her writings, especially through her provocative fairy tales. Ironically, in pursuit of a better world, the life she led was anything but a fairy tale.

Born on December 12, 1883, in Vienna, Hermine Isabella Maria Folliot de Crenneville was destined to lead a life of luxury, but the circumstances of her early childhood caused her to revolt against destiny. An only child, Zur Mühlen was neglected by her narcissistic mother and disciplined by her strict father, a career diplomat, to learn the rules of etiquette and aristocratic behavior so that she could appropriately represent her family and marry well. She never felt loved or understood by either of her parents. In contrast, her British grandmother, Isabella Gräfin von Wydenbruck, provided her support and encouraged her to cultivate liberal ideas, as did her favorite, eccentric Uncle Anton. By the time Zur Mühlen turned eleven, she formed a political group with several friends called the Anchor Society, and the radical politics of this society signaled the direction her life would take until her death. As she wrote in her best-selling 1929 memoir *Ende und Anfang: Ein Lebensbuch* (*The End and the Beginning: The Book of My Life*),

> After intense study of the "social question" from my eleventh year to twelfth years, which for me was exclusively a question of politics and had nothing to do with economics, I reached the conclusion that since the year '48, when the brave and generous bourgeoisie had taken to the barricades, nothing had been done for the improvement of the world. But now I had come along and would take matters in hand. Down with the aristocrats![1]

Of course, she never realized her project, but her revolutionary spirit did not abate over the years. In fact, she remained dedicated to socialist ideas throughout her life. But first, she en-

countered numerous obstacles before she could lead the life she desired.

When she decided in 1900 to become a schoolteacher, she enrolled in a pedagogical program in a convent in Gmünden, a small Austrian city, which had become her hometown, and by the end of 1901 she passed the examinations that would allow her to teach at public schools. However, her father prevented her from accepting a position as a teacher because it would have been beneath her social status to do something like this. For the next few years, she traveled with her father, learned different languages, encountered a young Russian woman who reinforced her socialist ideas, and studied bookbinding. Meanwhile, she had become desperate to separate from her family and to become independent. Consequently, in 1905, she decided to marry a German baron from Estonia, Viktor von Zur Mühlen, against her parents' will because they believed he was below her class. In addition to their misgivings, she herself was aware of the ideological differences with her future husband, as she noted in her memoir:

> Had the two of us searched the whole world over it would have been impossible for either of us to have found anyone less suited than we were to each other. There was nothing about which we did not have opposing opinions. My future husband related with pride and enthusiasm that he had spent most of his time in the previous two years shooting revolutionaries. I, on the other hand, dreamed of an estate run as a co-operative, in which all the workers had a share. Neither of us made a secret of our convictions, but the young Balt, accustomed to the submissive German women of his

> homeland, assumed that after the first two or three children my "madness" would automatically disappear, while I, for my part, was convinced that it would be an easy matter for me to "convert" him.[2]

For the next nine years, spent in isolation on a dismal feudal estate in northern Estonia, Zur Mühlen learned a bitter lesson. All her attempts to change conditions on the estate failed; the intellectual climate among the Estonian aristocrats was zero; the impoverished conditions among the peasants were overwhelming. Moreover, her own health suffered so much that she developed tuberculosis, and in 1913 she entered a Davos health clinic in Switzerland, never to return to Estonia again.

During the six years that she spent in Davos, Zur Mühlen was not able to overcome the tuberculosis, which plagued her for the remainder of her life. However, she flourished because she came into contact with like-minded people who inspired her passion to change the world. The most significant person was Stefan Klein, an Austrian translator, who had been raised in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He shared her political views and interests in literature, and they inspired one another. From this point onward, they became lifelong partners and often collaborated on different projects. Zur Mühlen was particularly excited by the outbreak of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, and one of the first works that she translated was Leonid Nikolajev Andrejev's *Das Joch des Krieges* (The Burden of War, 1918). She followed this with translations of Upton Sinclair's novels and articles and short stories against wars in various newspapers and journals. At the same time, she began to reflect and write about the trivial and demeaning literature for girls and how children's literature played an important

role in the socialization of young people. Numerous authors in Europe began to do this as well.

At the end of World War I, Zur Mühlen divorced her Estonian husband and moved with Klein to Frankfurt am Main, where they were to spend the next fourteen years dedicated to "changing the world" through their writing. By this time, they were both members of the German Communist Party, and they played an active role in fostering the principles of the party through their translations of progressive authors, articles in journals and newspapers, stories, and novels. Up until the early 1930s, Russia was for Zur Mühlen the symbol of socialist hope, and her critique of injustice and exploitation of the working classes in Weimar Germany was based on her vision of revolutionary change in Russia and her ethical and idealist notions for transforming Germany. Given the poor living conditions, her fragile health, and lack of money while she was living in Frankfurt—Viktor Zur Mühlen kept her dowry after their divorce and she refused to ask her family for money—Zur Mühlen's accomplishments in this period of her life are remarkable.

Her first major pioneering effort was in the realm of fairy tales. In 1921, she published *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (*What Little Peter's Friends Told Him*), which employed a frame narrative to include six different household objects telling young Peter stories one after the other that pertain to the difficult lives of working-class people. Peter has broken his leg and has to remain at home while his mother works in a factory. The objects come to life to explain their relationship to humans. Similar to the tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Hans Christian Andersen, who created talking objects, Zur Mühlen was much more explicit in relating the objects to the exploitation of workers. This book was timely due to the

difficult conditions of single women who had lost their husbands during World War I, the political conflicts in the early 1920s, the growing literacy of the lower classes, and the support of left-wing publishing houses like the Malik Verlag. Consequently, her book became an immediate success and was translated into ten foreign languages. Zur Mühlen continued her experiments with politicizing the fairy tale by publishing several other books that were addressed to adults as well as children: *Märchen* (Fairy Tales, 1922); *Ali, der Teppichweber* (Ali, the Carpet Weaver, 1923); *Das Schloß der Wahrheit* (The Castle of Truth, 1924); *Der Muezzin* (1927); *Die Söhne der Aischa* (The Sons of Aischa, 1927); *Said, der Träumer* (Said, the Dreamer, 1927); *Es war einmal . . . und es wird sein* (Once Upon a Time . . . It Will Be, 1930); and *Schmiede der Zukunft* (Forging the Future, 1933). The themes of all these fairy tales dealt with social injustice, discrimination, tyranny, deception, enlightenment, and the significance of solidarity among members of the working class.

Zur Mühlen was not alone in reinvigorating the fairy tale with a socialist bent in the interwar years of 1919 to 1939. In Germany, she was joined by Erich Kästner, Berta Lask, Lisa Tetzner, Bruno Schönlank, Oskar Maria Graf, Kurt Schwitters, and Edwin Hoernle, not to mention the Hungarian Béla Balázs. There were literally hundreds of writers, illustrators, and publishers in Europe (including the United Kingdom) and North America who changed the "field" of children's literature due to the rippling effect of World War I that opened the way for socialist and communist cultural movements, seeking new ways to change the socialization of children through political literature. Such books as Mathilde Léveque's *Le renouveau du roman et du récit pour la jeunesse en France et en Allemagne pendant l'entre-deux guerres* (2007); Julia Mickenberg

and Philip Nel's *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children's Literature* (2010); Kimberley Reynolds's *Left Out: The Forgotten Tradition of Radical Publishing for Children in Britain 1910–1949* (2016); and my book, *Fairy Tales & Fables from Weimar Days* (2018) reveal how widespread radical children's literature was and how interconnected the publishers were through the publication of translations. In particular, Léveque has shown how the works of Zur Mühlen and also Lisa Tetzner were widely translated in France, while authors like Paul Valliant-Couturier, whose marvelous work *Jean sans Pain* (Jean without Bread, 1921), was not only translated but also adapted by Tetzner.

While Zur Mühlen, herself a superb translator of American left-wing authors, wrote political fairy tales, she also published a series of mystery novels under the pseudonym Lawrence Desberry. These popular books included *Die blaue Strahl* (The Blue Ray, 1922); *An den Ufern des Hudsons* (On the Bank of the Hudson River, 1925); and *Im Schatten des elektrischen Stuhls* (In the Shadow of the Electric Chair, 1929). Under the pseudonym Traugott Lehmann, Zur Mühlen published *Die weiße Pest. Ein Roman aus Deutschlands Gegenwart* (The White Plague: A Novel about the Present Situation in Germany, 1926). In all these novels, she raised questions about criminality, corruption, depravation, justice, law, and order. In other works such as *Lina. Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (Lina: A Story from the Life of a Servant, 1926) and *Nora hat eine famose Idee* (Nora Has a Great Idea, 1933), she explored the "woman" question: how lower-class women were exploited, and how women in general had to struggle for better treatment. Though Zur Mühlen did not consider herself a "feminist," there was no question in her mind that women should have equal rights with men, and her own life and writings

were, to a certain degree, exemplary in this respect. As Lynda King has noted:

> Before joining the K.P.D. (Communist Party) Zur Mühlen did not belong to a women's movement, and there is no evidence that she later was identified with any women's group, nor that she ever used any term equivalent to feminist to describe herself. First and foremost she was dedicated to the goals and principles of the socialist movement as she understood them. But one socialist principle stood high on her list of priorities: Women's position in society had to be changed. Her writing was a tool for increasing public awareness of the issues vital to women.[3]

And her writing was always intended to motivate readers to take some kind of political action. As early as 1924, with the publication of her story "Schupomann Karl Müller" (Policeman Karl Müller), charges of high treason were brought against her for instigating political action against the police. The charges were dropped, but Zur Mühlen's name was registered by the police, and she and Klein were under police surveillance during their time in Frankfurt. When the Nazi takeover of the government occurred in early 1933, they knew that their time of departure had arrived, and they left for Vienna in April of that year.

Once again, due to financial difficulties, they moved several times and had limited opportunities to publish their writings. Zur Mühlen was well-known and the breadwinner, but even she had difficulties placing her stories or publishing the few novels she wrote during this time. These were mainly autobiographical in nature, yet politics always played a role in them, as can be seen in two

of her most important anti-fascist novels, *Ein Jahr im Schatten* (One Year in Shadows, 1935) and *Unsere Töchter, die Nazinen* (Our Daughters, the Nazis, 1935). During her hectic time in Vienna, where she could not depend on any assistance from her family (her parents were now dead), Zur Mühlen resigned from the Communist Party because of its authoritarian tendencies that had become clear to her, especially in Russia, where Stalin had begun to initiate the terror trials. Zur Mühlen had always promoted liberty, equality, democratic choice, and solidarity as her socialist principles, and she realized that she could not work any longer within the Communist Party to change it. Moreover, her project was always to improve the world.

In the meantime, her world kept changing when the Nazis invaded and occupied Austria in March of 1938. Zur Mühlen and Klein had to flee immediately, and this time they traveled to Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, where they had friends. Moreover, Klein had Czech citizenship, which entitled them to certain benefits. Later that year, they married, so Zur Mühlen now had three passports—Austrian, Russian, and Czech—but barely a chance to earn a living. No sooner did they make contacts and get settled in Bratislava than the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, and this time they fled to England, arriving there on June 19, 1939.

Soon after their arrival, they were interned in a location south of London under miserable conditions that badly affected Zur Mühlen's health. Once they were released in September, they eventually found a small place in Hertfordshire just north of London, adequate enough for both to begin writing and translating again. This was to be their home until Zur Mühlen died in 1951.

Despite her weakened condition, Zur Mühlen threw herself into her work and published essays, fairy tales, novels, stories, and

translations. She even did some radio work. However, her writing did not pay well, and she and Klein were dependent on the PEN Club and the Czech Refugee Trust Fund for financial aid. Since Zur Mühlen was fluent in English, not to mention Russian and French, she published stories and articles for English-speaking readers always with a strong anti-fascist tendency. Though she explored the possibility of returning to Austria at the end of the war, she abandoned this idea when she realized that her home country was not receptive to exiled writers who had contested the Nazi regime even if they were no longer communists.

There was, indeed, a major change in Zur Mühlen's ideology during the 1930s and 1940s. Where she had formerly placed her faith in the Communist Party to spearhead the way to a socialist future, she now placed her faith in religion. Though Zur Mühlen was not a devout Catholic, her ethical and moral principles were strongly religious, and her later writing reflected a greater focus on spiritual belief than on communism. The ideological difference between *Little Allies: Fairy and Folk Tales of Fourteen Nations* (1945), a book that has been largely neglected and that was written in English, and *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him* could not be greater. Whereas her early narrative framework was conceived to address problems of the working class and faith in the solidarity of the oppressed, Zur Mühlen recast the narrative framework to allow her to stress how faith in God and mutual understanding are necessary for the building of a new society that is not necessarily socialist. *Little Allies* is set near the end of World War II in a castle to which numerous refugee children from different countries are invited to spend a weekend. A twelve-year-old British boy named John and his two friends Czech Ján and Polish Jan are asked by John's mother to look after them and to entertain them, while she

attends a sick friend. At first, the children fight with one another, until the older boys come upon the idea that the children should tell stories about their home countries. They all agree, and Zur Mühlen then adapts fourteen tales from Denmark, Norway, Poland, Austria, France, and so on to create a sense of international understanding and to strengthen the children's Christian faith in God. Not all the folk and fairy tales have a religious bent, but a tale such as "The Crown of the King of Domnonée," for example, reflects the general change in Zur Mühlen's ideological approach to socializing children and raising their social and political conscious. Based on the tale type "The Singing Bones," this story allegedly from Brittany concerns a good king who prays to God for help to save many of his people from rabies. A hermit by the name of Meen arrives, and after the king builds a monastery for him, the hermit magically cures the people of rabies. Later, this same hermit gives the king's youngest son, Judicael, a magic rod to find the crown that the king had lost in battle, because this son reveres God. However, his two older brothers are malicious, and they kill Judicael to gain credit for finding the crown. Five years later, when the king hears flute music in a forest generated by the magic rod, he discovers Judicael's body and brings it to the monastery, where the hermit prays to God so that Judicael is restored to life. His father wants to kill the brothers, but Judicael begs his father to forgive his brothers for their sin. In turn, they go out into the world to fight for God and the truth. Soon thereafter the king dies, and Judicael ascends the throne and maintains peace throughout his reign.

Clearly, Zur Mühlen's views about class struggle, solidarity of the working people, the causes of war, international conflict, and peace changed greatly toward the end of her life. Strangely, despite their good morals, the tales in *Little Allies* contradict deeply held

beliefs about the socialization of children, who were to become enlightened through communism. This does not mean that Zur Mühlen reneged and abandoned her struggle to improve the world. As Lionel Gossman remarks about her last years in England,

> Overcoming the pessimism, despair, and sense of isolation that she projected convincingly on to several of her women characters, identifying with the oppressed, and taking an active stand against injustice remained the primary imperative of the lapsed Catholic as well as the former Communist. Not surprisingly, individual Communists remain, along with truly devout Christians, among the most decent and admirable characters in her fiction.[4]

The fairy tales selected for publication in this book stem primarily from Zur Mühlen's radical Weimar years and are intended to provide a comprehensive view of the innovative techniques that she used in her tales to provoke and raise the political consciousness of readers, young and old. In contrast to the classical fairy tales of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Andersen, Zur Mühlen's focus was constantly on the plight of the working class under capitalist conditions that had to be changed to create greater social justice. At the beginning of her career as a writer in Germany during the 1920s, she published her tales first in left-wing newspapers and magazines such as *Die rote Fahne* (The Red Flag) and *Der junge Genosse* (The Young Comrade). Her first book, *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him*, was illustrated by George Grosz, one of the foremost experimental painters of that time. Though the six stories in *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him* are intended to wake the political consciousness of children and are written in a simple, di-

rect style to provide hope, Grosz's pointed and often bleak pen-and-ink drawings serve to remind readers that better times are not around the corner. Indeed, they capture the dark destinies of the protagonists in Zur Mühlen's tales.

Lionel Gossman perceptively notes that Zur Mühlen

> adapted a direct, unadorned prose style, reminiscent of the traditional tale, and relied on simple, antithetical moral and psychological categories to define her characters—greed and generosity, cruelty and kindness, haughtiness and modesty, hypocrisy and honesty, trickery and transparency. Inevitably this resulted in a considerable simplification of complex social and economic processes and situations. Nevertheless, Zur Mühlen's fairy tales prescribe models of behavior radically opposed to those of traditional fairy tales, the basic lesson of which had been that all one's wishes will come true if one overcomes temptation and faithfully observes established norms of good conduct.[5]

Zur Mühlen's most significant collection of tales, in my opinion, is *The Castle of Truth*, which has a strong autobiographical element. In the title tale, a beautiful young woman from the working class is exposed to the rays of truth from an indestructible castle, and consequently, she realizes how brutal the elite class is, and that she has made a mistake by marrying a wealthy baron. When she relates her experiences to his upper-class friends, who are like sinister beasts, she is sent to an insane asylum. However, the castle becomes a beacon of true light that exposes the criminality of the ruling class. Typical of all the tales in this collection is their open ending. Zur Mühlen did not believe in the happy ending of classical fairy

tales. The endings of her tales were intended to provoke and incite readers to political action. For instance, in "The Glasses," readers are encouraged to rip off the glasses that blind them from the truth. By doing this, they will follow in the footsteps of the people of the East (that is, Russia) to attain fair living conditions. In "The Servant," readers learn that they must share the means of production—that is, the machines—to serve the people and not just the ruling classes. In "The Carriage Horse," the workhorses organize a union to resist exploitation and bad living conditions. In "The Broom," a young worker by the name of Karl learns how to sweep away injustice with a magic broom, for injustice will keep happening unless one is actively involved in the struggle against tyranny. Zur Mühlen does not mince her words, just as the illustrator Karl Holtz does not hold back from depicting the devastating conditions under which the majority of people lived and suffered in the Weimar Republic.

Perhaps Zur Mühlen's most moving tale was published in her 1930 collection, *Once Upon a Time . . . It Will Be*. It is called "The Red Flag" not because of its association with the Russian Revolution but because it is the flag soaked in the blood of murdered refugees on an island ruled by a tyrant. It is this flag that unites different groups of exploited refugees to realize how much they have in common and to rebel against the tyrant and his lackeys. As Zur Mühlen writes:

> Later, the former slaves, who became the masters of the factories and the island, succeeded in building a large ship and returned to their home countries. They carried the red flag and boldly planted it in all their homelands. Afterward a miracle occurred throughout all the countries—the people

who rallied around the red flag were able to understand one another even when they spoke different languages, and they gradually merged and formed a powerful army with courage and determination that took up the battle against the exploitative and oppressive monsters of the world.[6]

This was a tale written when Zur Mühlen was losing faith in the Communist Party and when the rise of Nazism in Germany had become more than dangerous. Zur Mühlen did not rewrite or modernize traditional fairy tales such as "Red Riding Hood" or "Sleeping Beauty" to explain to her readers how to combat fascism. There are no princesses and princes in her tales or happy weddings. The sources for her stories were the injustices that she viewed throughout Europe and the courage of people deprived of humane living conditions. It is striking to see in her unusual fairy tales how much she valued international cooperation of working people as the basis for doing away with aristocracies and improving the world. Even in her very last fairy-tale book of 1944, *Little Allies*, her call for international understanding and unification still resonated, and the children from different countries are depicted as coming together to tell their stories—which were *her* hopeful stories.

Notes

1. Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *The End and the Beginning: The Book of My Life*, ed. and trans. Lionel Gossman (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010): 20. For the original German, see *Ende und Anfang: Ein Lebensbuch* (Berlin: Fischer, 1929).
2. Ibid., 98.
3. Lynda King, "From the Crown to the Hammer and Sickle: The Life

and Works of the Austrian Interwar Writer Hermynia Zur Mühlen," in *Women in Germany Yearbook* 4 (1988): 127. See also Alisa Wallace's chapter 4, "Socialist Literature for Girls," in *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: The Guises of Socialist Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 101–30.

4. Lionel Gossman, "Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen," in Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *The End and the Beginning*, 286.
5. Ibid., 298.
6. Zur Mühlen, *Es war einmal . . . und Es Wird Sein* (Berlin: Verlag der Jugend Internationale, 1930): 63.

A Note on the Illustrators

Hermynia Zur Mühlen was fortunate to find publishing houses that worked with some of the most truly gifted and creative artists of the Weimar Republic: George Grosz (1893–1959), John Heartfield (1891–1968), Karl Holtz (1899–1978), and Heinrich Vogeler (1872–1942). They often collaborated with the publishers Malik Verlag and Verlag der Jugendinternationale, as well as magazines and newspapers such as *Die rote Fahne* (The Red Flag).

Grosz was well-known for his provocative caricatures of Berlin life and was a member of the Berlin Dada and expressionist movements. He provided illustrations for Zur Mühlen's *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (*What Little Peter's Friends Told Him*) in 1922. In 1933, he fled the Nazis and began a more conventional career in America.

Holtz was also a caricaturist, and while serving in the German army during World War I, he worked for several different magazines and newspapers: *Die rote Fahne* (The Red Flag), *Der wahre Jacob* (The True Jacob), and *Lachen Links* (Laughing on the Left). He drew the illustrations for Zur Mühlen's *Märchen* (1922) and *Das Schloß der Wahrheit* (1924).

Heartfield was a visual artist who was famous for creating photomontages with anti-fascist tendencies. He created the illustrations for Zur Mühlen's *Ali, der Teppichweber* (Ali, the Carpet Weaver, 1922). He, his brother Wieland, and George Grosz

founded the left-wing publishing house Malik Verlag. Like Zur Mühlen, they fled to England and the United States soon after the Nazis came to power in 1933.

Vogeler was a painter and graphic artist and a founding member of the famous artist colony the Worpswede Werkstätte in 1908. Aside from creating illustrations and paintings in an art nouveau style, Vogeler began taking more of an interest in proletarian causes after World War I and joined the Communist Party. In 1930, the year he immigrated to Russia, he created illustrations for Zur Mühlen's *Es war einmal . . . es wird sein* (Once Upon a Time . . . It Will Be) and later, in 1933, for her *Schmiede der Zukunft* (Forging the Future).

TALES

1 ■ Three Tales from *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him* (1921)

The Coal's Story (1921)

Ever since little Peter had fallen on the slippery ice and had broken his leg, he had to lie in bed quietly and was not allowed to move much. Moreover, since his mother worked the entire day outside the house, he became bored. His friends played outside in the snow and did not think at all of visiting their friend. During the day, when the light and the rays of the sun penetrated the window and cast comical shadows on the walls, the young boy could amuse himself somewhat. However, when evening arrived and the tiny room became darker and darker, little Peter became scared and could not wait to hear his mother's steps on the stairs. In addition, most of the time he froze because he could not light the small iron stove. His mother did this after she returned home.

One time it snowed throughout the day, and from his bed, Peter watched the large, fluffy white flakes fall to the ground. When it became dark and gloomy, he lay there freezing, sad, and a bit frightened. Then, all of a sudden, it seemed to him as if someone was whispering on the floor. He listened and heard two soft voices coming from the little wooden box containing some pieces of coal. The little boy became scared. He did not dare to breathe, and the soft voices became louder and louder in the quiet room. Two pieces of coal were speaking to one another.

"How dark it is here!" said one of the pieces of coal that laid on top. "You can't see a thing."

"Where I come from," the other piece of coal responded, "it's even darker."

"Where do you come from?"

"From the ground, sister. I laid buried in the ground and slept. It was completely warm and comfortable, and there were numerous sisters sleeping and pressed right next to me. One day, our quarters began to shake, and a huge loud noise woke me. The earth fell apart, and out I rolled. I fell into a narrow passageway. It was so small and low that it was impossible for a human being to stand erect inside. Yet, a man was there, completely bent over, and he struck the wall. He coughed, and sweat flowed down from his forehead. But he did not stop to rest. He continued to hit the wall for many hours. Oh, how tired the poor man was! His hands trembled. Sometimes, he sighed aloud and rubbed his back as if it were causing him pain. But immediately thereafter, he began striking the wall again. It was very hot in this small passageway. Ever since I learned how humans need air to breathe, I don't understand how the man down there could survive because there was no air and it smelled so badly. I believe the man, who suffered there and made such a sad and angry face, must have been a bad man who had been locked in this passageway as punishment for his crimes. Later, I was taken to a little cart and brought into the open air. But I could not stop thinking about the poor man who could not stand erect and whose back hurt him so much."

"All you've experienced is nothing!" a small piece of coal squeaked that had rolled from the box and laid on the edge of the stove. "I've seen much worse than a man whose back hurts. I laid in a long, long passageway. It was narrow and low just like the one that you

described. Ten men worked there. They had hung some lanterns up ahead. An old man spoke, 'It smells so strange here. I think it would be better if we turn around.' 'Then we would be fired,' another man said. So they continued to work. You see, if a man is fired, then his wife and his little children will have nothing to eat and will starve.

"And if a man does not do everything that his boss demands, he'll be fired. The light of the lanterns continued to burn more dimly until it had become completely dark in the passageway. A man looked inside, and the old miner spoke with him. 'Sir, I don't like it here. Let us climb out of here.' The boss became very angry, scolded the old man as though he were a schoolboy, and then left quickly. The men sighed and continued to work. I don't know why they obeyed this one man. He looked just like all the others and was not particularly big and powerful.

"All of a sudden, I was forced to roll farther on. I looked up but none of the men had kicked me, and then I found myself soaring into the air. At the same time, there was a terrible explosion. The small lanterns no longer shone, and huge pieces of dirt went flying through the air. I heard the men yelling and groaning in the darkness for hours on end. One of them had fallen on top of me. I felt his trembling, and there was something wet flowing from his head. I don't know just how long we laid there in darkness. At first, the men screamed and called out, but gradually their voices grew weaker and weaker. Sometimes one would moan and ask for water, but there was none there. After a very long time had passed, the men were taken out of there. Some other men came and carried them away. But they were all dead except for the old man. Women and children were standing outside and weeping. There was also a large gentleman standing there, and when the old man was carried

past him, he made a fist and said softly: 'You knew that this passageway was dangerous, but your money is more precious to you than our lives.' However, the gentleman did not pay any attention to the old man. I could see everything because I had been hanging on the ragged shirt of the miner and had been carried outside."

"But you didn't see," a third piece of coal spoke up, "how, in the evening, when the dead men laid in their huts and the women and children wept, there was a big party in the gentleman's home. Many beautiful women danced there in colorful silk dresses, and none of them thought about the small children who had lost their fathers. In addition, the rich man laughed, even though he was the one who had sent the men into that passageway where they had died. I don't understand these people and why they treat each other so badly and torture one another."

"I can explain that to you," said a fourth piece of coal, which was very black and glittering. "I've been living on earth for quite a long time and have seen a good deal. Moreover, I have always been the smartest among my sisters. Therefore, I can understand everything. There are two kinds of people in the world—the rich and the poor. The rich own everything that's there, and the poor have nothing. Just look at the poor boy lying here in bed. He's sick and must lie alone in bed the entire day. He doesn't have a toy or soft bed. There's nothing good to eat, and his mother doesn't have any time to take care of him because she must work in the factory the entire day. Do you perhaps think that things are bad for him because he's bad? No, he's a good, hardworking boy, but he's poor. I could give you some other examples. I once traveled on a ship over a large ocean. The rich people lived in beautiful bright cabins, strolled on the deck back and forth, and ate and drank well. Down under in the bilge, there is a large machine that propels the ship. It's hot as

hell there and smells like oil and soot. Men stand there the entire day and night and shovel coal into a glowing hole. They are half-naked, and nevertheless, it is so hot that they can hardly breathe. Sometimes one of them becomes dizzy. He runs to the top of the ship and doesn't see where he is going and just wants to breathe some fresh air. Then he jumps into the ocean and drowns. Many of the men become sick from the dreadful heat, but they continue to stay in the bottom of the ship and shovel coal."

"Don't the rich people ever go below and help?" squeaked the tiniest piece of coal.

The glittering black coal laughed, "How dumb you are! The rich people let the poor work for them so that they don't have to do anything but lead a luxurious life. Everything that poor people do benefits the rich."

"Are the poor people so much weaker than the rich that they can't help themselves?" the curious little coal piece asked.

"Not at all," the smart, glittering coal answered. "There are many more poor people than there are rich. If the poor people would stick together, they could have everything that the rich people possess today."

"Why don't they do this?"

"You must ask them, little sister," responded the smart coal. "I've never understood it."

Steps could be heard on the stairs, and the coal became silent.

The Matchbox's Story (1921)

The following day seemed especially long to little Peter. He could hardly wait for the evening to come. Would the little pieces of coal begin chatting with one another again and telling each other something interesting?

He had dreamed about deep, dark passageways the entire night and also about ships that sailed over enormous seas. And now he wanted very much to hear about something new. But the night entered on tiptoes into the small room, opened its black coat that had covered everything in darkness, and yet, everything remained quiet in the corner where the oven stood.

Tears filled the little boy's eyes, for he had looked forward the entire day to hearing a story in the evening, and now these mean pieces of coal kept quiet. All at once he felt abandoned. His mother was always off somewhere. He always had to lie in bed alone and was tormented by pain. Soon the tears began to roll down his cheeks, and the little boy began to weep bitterly. Then, in the middle of his sobbing, he heard a tender voice: "Why are you crying?"

Little Peter quickly looked toward the corner where the oven was standing, but the voice had not come from there. Rather it came from someplace right near his bed. And now he also saw that the matchbox stood erect on top of the little table next to the bed. It bent over as if it wanted to bow.

"Why are you crying?" the matchbox asked.

"It's so sad to lie here completely alone," the little boy complained.

"But you're not alone," the matchbox responded, and jumped onto the bed in one big leap. "The entire room is full of things that can lend you company. You just have to open your eyes and ears."

Little Peter was already consoled. He extended his hand shyly and stroked the friendly matchbox.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm a tree."

The little boy was amazed as he stared at the matchbox. He didn't want to insult it, especially because he was a city boy and had

not seen many trees in his life, but he couldn't believe that this small matchbox was the same as a large, powerful tree. He laughed in embarrassment, and the matchbox seemed to guess his thoughts. It stood straight up and remarked proudly: "You don't believe that I was once a tree? Let me tell you all about it. By the way, it's impolite to doubt what someone tells you. But this is the way you people are. You lie and don't believe that others speak the truth."

Little Peter apologized with anxious words, and the matchbox nodded in a friendly way. Then it began talking again.

"Have you ever seen a large forest before?"

The little boy shook his head no.

"What? You were never in a forest? You've always lived in this horrible city?" the matchbox asked sympathetically.

The little boy nodded.

"Well then, think of a large forest with tree next to tree just like the houses here are standing next to one another. And these trees are also really houses because families of birds live in them. However, they don't live like you poor people crammed together in tiny rooms. They have plenty of space for their homes and are free to choose their places as they want. Moreover, they don't pay any rent because all the birds know that they have a right to housing. That's not how things work with you people. It never happens that a little bird lives completely alone in an enormous house with many rooms while others, five or six, have to be satisfied to live together in a narrow room. You people divide things up pretty poorly."

The matchbox appeared to have completely forgotten the little boy and to be speaking to himself.

"I know that there are people who even have two houses, one in the country and the other in the city, while others often don't even have a room and have to sleep on the streets. In the forest some-

thing like that would be impossible. Those who didn't have housing would throw those that have two out of one of the homes. You people would just moan and groan and put up with anything. I don't know any animal who is as dumb as a human being."

The little boy was bored by these observations, and so he shyly touched the matchbox and asked: "Please tell me more about the forest."

"What should I tell you, you poor little creature, who's never seen a real forest? I was one of the tallest trees in a large, large forest. This forest belonged to a rich man, and he also owned enormous fields and hundreds of cows and horses and pigs and sheep. Before I first saw him, I believed that he must be a god, like the gods of ancient times, because numerous people exerted themselves for him day in and day out. They plowed his fields. They looked after his animals. They worked constantly to make sure that things went well for him. Then one day he came to us in the forest, and I saw that he was a man just like all other men. An ugly, fat man with red cheeks.

"Sometimes old women came to us in the forest to gather fallen dried-up wood. However, they were always very afraid they might be seen, because the rich man didn't allow poor people to gather wood in his forest. I don't know why. He himself didn't need the rotten wood. He just let it lie on the ground and rot.

"One time the forest warden caught a farm laborer who had shot a rabbit. The poor man pleaded and begged the warden to pardon him. His wife was sick at home, and she needed something nutritional to eat, and he was too poor to buy anything for her. However, all this pleading didn't help. The rich man had him thrown in jail. I didn't understand this at all. There were so many rabbits in the forest that it was impossible for the rich man to eat them all!

"In the fall, the woodcutters came. Oh, how hard these men worked, and yet, the trees that they chopped down did not belong to them but to the rich man. Everything belonged to him, the forest and the trees, the fields and the animals, and the people who had to work for him. But the forest took pity on the poor people and hated the evil people. A young spruce tree stood next to me. It was violent and angry and swore that it would one day show the rich man that he was nothing but a miserable, petty person. Indeed, it had seen how the poor man who had shot the rabbit had been taken away and how the rich man had caught two old women gathering wood one day and then drove them with a stick out of the forest. One night there was a powerful storm, and the young spruce tree had been partially uprooted. However, nobody noticed this because some moss had spun itself over the roots. The spruce tree knew that it was going to die, and before its death, it wanted to punish the evil rich man for being so hard-hearted.

"'We trees would never allow one tree alone to rule over us,' the spruce tree said, 'even though there are large and small, strong and weak trees among us just like among humans. However, we all know that the good earth, air, and sun, the rain and the dew belong to us all. Why isn't it the same with people, who think they are so smart?'

"It believed at that time, and I agreed, that everything was the fault of the rich man. Later, when I went to the factory and listened to the talk of the workers, I learned that the fault was due to the system that benefits a few but harms many people. But you won't understand this.

"As I was saying, the spruce tree wanted to do something for its poor friends before it died, and when the rich man came into the forest and was standing right before it, the spruce tree summoned

all its strength, and then I heard how it groaned with pain because its tendons tore apart as it plunged on top of the rich man. He uttered a terrible scream and fell to the ground. The warden sprang to his side and lifted him from the ground. The spruce tree had smashed his right arm.

"'That's your punishment!' the needles of the spruce tree whispered. 'You used your hand to drive the weeping old women from the forest. You used your hand to write the letter that accused the poor man of shooting a rabbit.'

"Then the spruce tree died.

"It had been a good and brave tree, and I often think about it."

The matchbox kept quiet for a moment and then mumbled angrily: "Yes, the system. One day, I'll try to explain it to you . . ."

Then the matchbox noticed the little boy had fallen asleep. Insulted, it jumped from the bed in one leap and then hid itself beneath it.

"Dumb people!" it grumbled, and crawled into the dark corner so that it wouldn't be disturbed and could think about its beloved forest.

The Water Bottle's Story (1921)

Some days after little Peter had listened to the matchbox's story, he received a visit toward evening. A woman dressed in black who seemed very strict entered the small room and sat down on his bed. The boy knew the woman. She frequently came to the poor city district, entered all the apartments without being asked, distributed religious pamphlets, and talked about God to the children.

The children were afraid of her. She never had a friendly smile on her face, and her stern lips never uttered a good word. Moreover, the God about whom she talked so much must have been very

similar. He constantly seemed to be angry, and demanded that the poor people work and that they should always be satisfied and grateful for their miserable lives.

On this day, too, the woman looked at Peter with a severe face. He would have liked to run away, but unfortunately, he could not move.

"My leg hurts me so much," he complained and hoped secretly that the stern woman might perhaps be nice to him.

However, she spoke with a hard voice: "This is a test that God has sent you. You must learn to tolerate your pain with patience." Then she asked, "Do you say your morning and evening prayers?"

"No," little Peter replied sincerely.

The stern woman seemed to be glad.

"You see, that's the reason why you fell and broke your leg."

"No," the little boy replied shyly. "I fell because the ice was slippery."

"Don't you contradict me!" the stern woman shouted with a nasty voice. "God wanted to punish you. That's why you fell. But that's not everything. Do you know where the naughty children go who don't pray?"

"No."

"They go to hell," the stern woman said with glee. "They must suffer there for all eternity. They are burned by flames and pinched by devils with red-hot pincers so that they scream from the pain. Your leg may hurt you, but that's nothing compared to the pain that you will have to suffer in hell! And your mother also, because she doesn't encourage you to pray."

The strict woman searched for something in the large bag that she always carried with her and took out a pamphlet. The cover pictured a man who stood in the middle of a sea of flames and

stretched out his arms while screaming loudly. Malicious little devils with large pincers came toward him on the right and on the left.

"Read this," the stern woman said. "Then you will know what's going to happen to you if you're not pious. Now I must go, for there are other people I must console with our sacred religion."

Then she left the room, and although night had come in the meantime, it seemed to little Peter as if the room had become brighter once the stern woman was no longer there. Yet, he was a little afraid. How terrible it would be, he thought, to be sent to hell, to burn forever, and to suffer pain all the time. And also he worried that his beloved mother was to be sent to this place. Why? She was always good and worked the entire day.

While little Peter thought about all these things, a light, tinkling laughter could be heard throughout the room. It sounded as though it were nearby, and when the boy looked up, he saw the water bottle and a glass laughing on the little table next to the bed, and they laughed so much that they could hardly stand. The large belly of the water bottle shook so much that the water started rolling in little waves.

"I can't hold it in any longer," the glass groaned. "I have a crack, and it's hurting me when I laugh. Ow, ow! I'm going to burst!"

"Why are you laughing so much?" little Peter asked.

The glass kept groaning, but the fat bottle cried out while it continued to shake from laughter. "That dumb old woman!"

The boy was secretly glad to hear this. If the bottle considered the stern woman dumb, perhaps she was really so and didn't know what she was talking about, and he and his mother would not be sent to hell.

"Why did you call the nasty lady dumb?" he asked.

The water in the neck of the bottle gurgled faintly, and then the

bottle stopped laughing and replied: "Didn't you hear what she told you about hell?"

"Of course," little Peter declared. "I am quite horrified about it."

"Because you're as dumb as the old woman," grumbled the bottle bluntly. "I know what hell is, but it wasn't created by God, rather it was made by people, and children and adults are not sent there because they have forgotten to pray but because they're poor. Relax and remain lying on your bed, and I'll tell you all about hell."

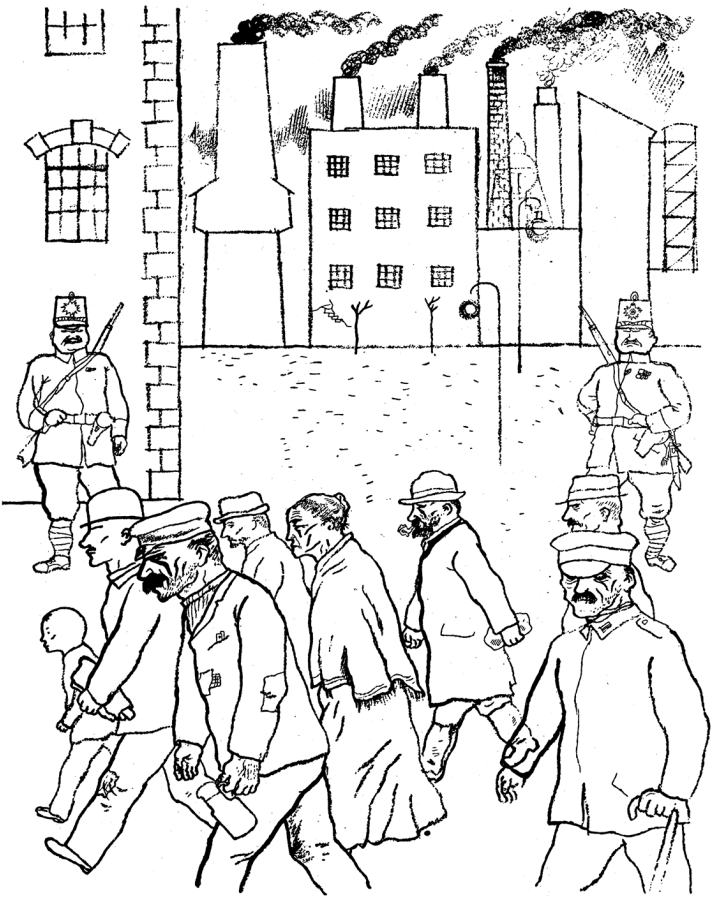
"Please, tell me," the little boy whispered.

"Have you ever been really, really hot?" the bottle asked.

"Oh, yes in the summer. Here on this street, the weather is so humid that you feel as though you might suffocate."

"Good. Then just think how it might be if it were a hundred times hotter. The air is like one huge flame. Your face hurts. Your hands are in pain. There's a very large stove in a room, and flames of all colors are flaring up. The stove spits nasty embers into the room. A man is standing before the stove. He is half-naked. The terrible heat beats down on him, presses his skull, and drives tears out of his sore red eyes. He holds a large iron pipe and dips it into the fire. Other men are shoving iron wagons with glowing things on top of them. Hot little fire glasses are stuck on iron poles. Children cut them off with tongs. If they are careless, they'll be hurt. Their skin will be burned down to their bones. Other children run about anxiously and tremble with little bottles that are glowing red-hot. Their faces are dripping with sweat. Their bodies quiver from the stress. They run about the entire day, and they run this way holding the burning death in their hands.

"Other workers blow into the iron pipes. Their faces turn bluish red, and their eyes pop out of their sockets. There is an eternal rushing and hurrying in this hot room. Men, women, and children



are racing about. The sweltering heat dries out their throats so that they can barely swallow. It stings like a thousand sharp needles stuck into their bodies, their hearts, and their coughing lungs. In addition, the ovens of hell burn and burn the entire day. Meanwhile the workers become more and more tired and can barely drag themselves about any longer. They stumble and are tortured by the fear of falling. The nasty fire that they carry could stream down upon them and swallow them. The faces of the children become old. They look like sad little dwarfs.

"The flames burn day after day. The heat simmers, and the people moan and cough, exhausted from the heat. They are half crazy. All this, my little Peter, is a real hell in which thousands of damned people suffer throughout the world."

"And you say that our dear God doesn't damn only evil people to this hell?" the boy asked.

The bottle laughed again, except it now sounded mean and grim.

"God! He doesn't have anything to do with this. People are the ones who damn each other to this hell. The people who suffer in this sweltering heat are just happy to be able to land in this hell. Otherwise, they and their children would perhaps die from hunger."

"But who sends these poor people to hell?"

"The rich people. They are the people who breathe wonderful cool air in beautiful gardens while the poor wither away in the heat. In this respect, the dumb old lady is completely right. There are devils who pinch and torture the poor damned people with glowing hot tongs, but these devils are not evil-looking. They don't have horns or tails. Instead, they wear handsome suits and silk clothes, and the tongs they hold are called misery and poverty."

"I don't understand why there are such mean people," little Peter said.

"The matchbox wanted to explain this to you," responded the bottle somewhat reproachfully. "It wanted to tell you about the capitalist system, but you fell asleep while it was talking."

"Please don't be angry," the boy said. "I don't understand these difficult words and don't know what they mean."

"They mean that whoever has money is the master of whoever doesn't have any. I don't think that all rich people are devils. However, they act as though they were the devil. And it happens this way. Already, as small children, they have everything they want and don't know what it means to starve and freeze. They only have to say: 'I want this. I want that,' and they get it right away. Naturally, they like it that way. Wouldn't you like a life like that?"

Little Peter nodded his head.

"When they get older later, they learn that it's money that provides their good life. Consequently, they always want money, a good deal of money, and that's why other people must work for them. But these other people don't have rich parents. They are just happy to be able to earn something, and they must put up with everything so that they don't starve. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," little Peter responded somewhat hesitantly. "But will it always be like this?"

"No," the bottle stated. "There are good and smart people in the world who fight against this system and demand that all people should be able to work, and each job they take should earn enough so that the people can live a decent life. These good and smart people are called socialists. Remember this word."

"I won't forget it," the boy promised. "Tell me something more. How do you know all about the hell that you described to me?"

"Because I myself was created there, you little blockhead! By the way, I've told you enough. Whenever I talk too much, the water inside me begins to move in waves and causes a stomachache. It's time for you to sleep a little. It's late. Your mother will soon be here."

2 ■ Why? (1922)

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who had neither mother nor father. Consequently, he lived in the poorhouse of a small village. He was the only child in the entire dwelling. All the other inhabitants were frail old people who were always in a miserable, grumpy mood. Most of the time, they preferred simply to sit silently in the sun. They became furious when the little boy bumped into them while playing, or when he made too much noise.

It was a sad life for little Paul. He never heard a kind word. Nobody hugged him. Nobody caressed and consoled him when he hurt himself. Instead, he was scolded every day and sometimes even beaten. In particular, Paul had a quirk, which especially irritated the supervisor of the poorhouse. Whenever he could, Paul would ask "why?" and always wanted to know the reason for something.

"One should not constantly ask questions," the supervisor declared. "Everything is as it is, and it's good that way."

"But why don't I have any parents like the other children in the village?" little Paul persisted in his questioning.

"Because they've died."

"Why did they die?"

"Because our dear Lord wanted it that way."

"Why did the dear Lord want it that way?"

"Quiet, you good-for-nothing! Leave me in peace with your eternal questions."

The pudgy woman became red with anger primarily because she didn't know the answers to Paul's questions, and nothing infuriates dumb people more than when they have to say, "I don't know why."

However, little Paul was not easily silenced. He looked at the angry red face and continued his questioning: "Why do you treat me so badly?"

Wham! She gave him a slap in the face. Paul began to weep and ran away from her, and as he ran, he yelled, "Why did you hit me?"

Paul went to the chicken yard, where a large speckled hen was strutting about, cackling loudly, and boasting proudly, "I've laid an egg! I've laid an egg! I've laid an egg! I've laid an egg! I've laid an egg!"

The rooster became annoyed hearing how the hens could boast about something that he couldn't do. Therefore, he cried out scornfully: "I'm the rooster here! You're just hens!"

Then the maid of the poorhouse, blonde-haired Marie, came to the yard, gathered the eggs carefully in her blue apron, and carried them into the house.

"Where are they taking all your eggs?" Paul asked the speckled hen.

"Into the city," she cackled.

"Who's going to eat them?"

"The rich people. The rich people," said the hen so proudly as though this were a great honor for her.

"Why don't I even get an egg?" Paul asked dismally. "After all I'm always so hungry."

"Because you're a penniless good-for-nothing," said the hen and fluffed her feathers grandly and looked at Paul contemptuously over her crooked nose from the corner of her eyes.

"Why am I a penniless good-for-nothing?"

Now the hen became just as angry as the pudgy supervisor and cackled furiously: "Get out of here! Get out of here! You bore me with your questions!"

Sadly, Paul trudged off. The gate to the garden stood open, and he walked through and onto the village road. Then he ambled aimlessly until he came to the open door of a stable for cows that belonged to a rich farmer.

Many splendid cows, white and reddish brown, stood in a row and looked straight ahead with soft large eyes. Paul felt enormously hungry, and so he approached a cow that appeared to be especially friendly.

"Dear cow," he said, "give me some of your milk to drink."

"I'm not allowed to do this," the cow answered. "The farmer owns my milk."

The young boy was astonished and looked first at the cow and then at the entire stable. Slowly he began counting the cows: "One, two three . . ." When he reached twelve, he stopped, even though there were still many cows left. He stopped only because he had trouble counting. To be sure, he learned a few things, but mostly to be modest and obedient, nothing more.

"Twelve cows," he spoke thoughtfully. "Can the farmer drink the milk from twelve cows?"

"Not at all," the friendly cow informed him. "The farmer sells the milk in the city."

Paul recalled the words of the speckled hen, and he asked: "Do the poor children there drink the milk?"

"Oh my God, little Paul!" the cow sighed. "How dumb and inexperienced you are! The milk is used to make wonderful whipped cream that they put on cake and tarts that are bought later by the rich people."

"Why aren't they bought by the poor people? Don't they like to eat cake?"

"You shouldn't ask so many questions, little boy," the cow responded. "I'm just a dumb cow and don't know how to answer your questions. In addition, it would be better for you if you go away from here. The farmer comes to the stalls about this time of day. If he were to see you, you'd certainly get a good beating."

Paul stroked the friendly cow's shiny fur and pushed on. Once again, he made his way along the road and came to a huge wheat field where the wind was blowing. It looked as if golden waves were moving softly. The heads of the wheatsang with tender voices. Their song sounded very sad, and Paul was able to decipher their words:

"Soon the reaper will come with his scythe, whizzz. He'll mow us down, whizzz. Then the people will bake fine white bread from us, whizzz!"

"Who eats the white bread?" asked Paul, who had never tasted a piece of white bread in his life.

"The rich people, the rich people," the wheat sang and swayed in time.

"Once again it's the rich people," Paul grumbled. "Does everything in the world belong to the rich people?"

"Everything, everything," the wheat whispered.

"Why?"

This question seemed to amuse the wheat. They bent over with laughter and sang: "How dumb you are! How dumb you are!"

But they didn't answer Paul's question. Now Paul was close to weeping. He stamped defiantly with his foot and yelled loudly: "I want answers to my questions! Can't anyone give me an answer?"

Just then, a hedgehog crawled leisurely across Paul's path and said, "The wisest creature that I know is the owl who lives in the great oak tree in the forest. Just go to her, you pest!"

"Can't you tell me why . . . ?"

The hedgehog didn't let him finish his question. He quickly tucked his head and showed all his barbs. Now he was just a ball covered by sharp barbs.

"I won't have anything to do with humans," he said, and his voice was just as sharp as his barbs. "They are all too dumb. Go to the owl, but don't irritate her, otherwise she'll hack out your eyes."

Evening was approaching and already sent its forerunners out, the black shadows that spread themselves gently over everything. It was dark in the woods, and little Paul felt uneasy. However, he thought that the most eerie forest was more pleasant than the horrible poorhouse, and he trudged onward.

The trees grew closer together and were dense. Now there was no path. Paul continued to walk on the soft green moss carpet. The forest had a wonderful smell. There were strawberries growing beneath the large trees, and the little boy plucked them as he walked and refreshed himself.

Finally, he reached a huge oak tree and saw the owl sitting on a branch. She was wearing large glasses and was keenly studying a green leaf that she was holding between the claws of her toes. Paul stopped beneath the oak tree and cried out: "Mother Owl! Mother Owl!"

The owl was so absorbed in her study of the leaf that she didn't hear anything, and only after Paul had called to her several times

did she look up, utter an angry sound, and look down at Paul with furious round eyes.

"What do you want, then?" she asked. "How dare you disturb me while I'm studying something?"

"Please excuse me, Mother Owl," Paul pleaded. "The hedgehog sent me to you. He told me that you were the wisest creature he knew, and that you would know how to answer my questions."

"What do I care about the hedgehog's views? What's so important about your questions?" the owl growled. "Am I to lose my valuable time all because of such a dumb child? You know that I can only see at nighttime, and the summer nights are so very short that they leave me with little time to do my studies. Moreover, I ponder over all kinds of questions. There's one in particular that's been tormenting me now for countless years, and because of it, I've become gray and old. There's not one science in the world that's been able to help me solve it."

The owl sighed deeply and made a sad face.

"And just what is this question?" little Paul inquired with great curiosity.

"Do you believe perhaps that you can answer it, you whippersnapper?" the owl hissed. "All the questions of the world are contained in this one question, which is: Why are humans so dumb?"

"Are humans really so dumb?" the astonished Paul asked.

"Yes, if you don't at least even know this, then why are you bothering me? Are you plain stupid because you haven't seen anything of the world yet?"

"I've just seen a little," the little boy was ashamed to say. "I'd like you to know, Mother Owl, I live in a poorhouse, and there is nothing there but adults and old people who are all naturally smart."

"Ha, ha, ha," the owl laughed, and her laughter sounded creepy in the dark forest. "Ha, ha, ha! Once again, you are a good proof for the stupidity of humans. Do you really think that all the people in the poorhouse are smart? Well, we are going to see if you are right. Who do you like the most in the poorhouse?"

"Marie."

"Who is Marie?"

"The maid."

"What does Marie do?"

"She works the entire day. She gets up already at five and is the last one to go to bed."

"Then she earns a good deal of money, has marvelous clothes, and good meals."

"Oh no, she's dirt poor and must constantly mend her clothes, and she eats what the others leave on their plates."

"Hmmm. Well, why does she work so hard when she gets nothing from it?"

Little Paul reflected and finally admitted, "I don't know."

"But I know: it's because she's dumb! Even Marie knows that there are posh people who don't move a finger, wear marvelous clothes, eat delicious food, and lead a splendid life. Hasn't Marie ever asked how come she, who works the entire day, doesn't own anything, and those people who do nothing have everything they want?"

"I don't think so."

"Then your Marie is dumb, very dumb. Who else do you consider smart, you little lamb?"

"Old Jacob."

"Who is old Jacob?"

"He's a temporary worker and is already eighty years old. He

worked until he turned seventy. Now he can't do anything anymore and has crippled hands and feet because of rheumatism."

"Sixty years he's worked for other people! That's a good long time! So Jacob is probably treated like a king, and everyone competes to serve him? I imagine he has a wonderful soft bed to rest his tired limbs, receives choice food for his meals, and lives a glorious and joyful life?"

"Oh, no. The fat supervisor always scolds him when he complains that the bread is too hard for his teeth. And when he asks for a little tobacco, she becomes angry and screams that he's greedy."

"Then why has old Jacob worked until he was seventy if he doesn't even have a good life in his old age?"

"I don't know."

"Because he's dumb. He knows just like Marie that there are cultured gentlemen who don't do anything at all and nevertheless live like kings. Do you see now, you little whippersnapper, that humans are dumb?"

"Yes," Paul replied somewhat saddened. "But now I'd like to ask you something, dear Mother Owl: why are there rich people in the world?"

"Actually, after our conversation, you should be able to answer this question yourself, you little dumbbell! Simply put, it's because poor people are dumb."

"But why are they dumb?"

Now, however, the owl became furious, just like the fat supervisor and the speckled hen had become.

"Didn't I say to you, you whippersnapper, you dumb nincompoop, that I've been thinking about this question for years and years? Come to me in eighty years, and then I might be able to answer your question."

"But why . . . ?"

"Be quiet!" the owl barked at little Paul. "You've already cost me enough of my precious time. Go to the devil!"

"Where does he live?" little Paul was frightened as he asked.

However, the owl had already adjusted her glasses again and began to immerse herself in the study of the green leaf. She didn't answer him.

"Oh, what a poor dummy I am!" little Paul thought sadly. "Now I'm supposed to go to the devil and don't know how to get to his place. Will the devil know more than the owl? And I'm already so tired. My feet hurt me. He sank on the soft green moss at the roots of a slim young birch tree. He gradually fell into deep despair. He thought about how he was so completely abandoned and alone and how nobody was kind to him. Suddenly, he burst into bitter tears.

All at once, he heard an exquisite, little voice high in the tree. It sounded like a pure silver bell.

"Why are you crying, little boy?" the silver voice asked.

Paul looked up and glanced at a wondrous creature sitting on a branch of the birch tree. Never before in his life had he seen such a beautiful woman like this one. She had long, auburn hair. Her face was pale and fine like the moonshine, and her large eyes glistened green like the leaves of the birch tree. She swayed easily like a feather and floated down to Paul and touched him. Then she caressed his face with her white hands. How good it was to be stroked by tender hands. His tears dried up. He stared at the wondrous creature and finally asked: "Who are you?"

"I'm a dryad. I'm the soul of this birch tree," the creature explained. "I must sit in my tree the entire day, but when night comes, I'm free. Then, I fly to the ground and play with my sisters, the other dryads. Now, tell me why you are so sad."

Paul lamented about his pain and suffering, and at the end he said, "I must continually ask: why? This question is stinging my heart. It hurts, and I believe that if I were to get an answer, I'd be happy. However, it's now standing like a large wall between everyone and me because they don't ask questions. All this makes me feel very lonely."

"You're mistaken, little Paul," she said softly. "You're not alone. Hundreds and thousands of people are sad and desperate and pose the same questions. Put your ear to the ground and tell me what you hear."

Paul obeyed. At first, he merely heard an unclear murmuring and whispering. Then it seemed to him that he heard a powerful weeping and complaining. Finally, he could also distinguish words.

"Mother, I'm hungry. Why isn't there anything to eat?" A child's voice was complaining.

"I'm suffocating in this hot city. Why can't I go into the countryside like my rich schoolmates?" a boy's murmurs could be heard.

"I slaved away the entire day. Why are my wages so low that I can barely manage to live?" a woman's voice sighed.

"Why do the idle rich have everything and the workers, nothing?" a man's voice droned.

Now all the voices sounded together. They muttered, moaned, complained, and threatened: "Why? Why?"

Paul stood up from the ground, looked at the marvelous dryad, who was sitting silently next to him, and asked: "Who are these people I just heard?"

"They're your people," the small dryad answered. "They're your family. You've just heard all the languages of the world, and yet, you understood every word. When you become older and set out into the world, then you'll hear all your questions from the mouths of

all the people you meet—angry, sad, and anxious. Every day, there will be new voices in the choir. In addition, when millions and more than millions of voices grow out of the thousands of voices, then the answer to your question will be found, and then there will no longer be any misery and need. It will also be the end of the lazy freeloaders."

"When will this happen?" Paul asked eagerly.

"I can't tell you exactly when all this will happen, but I do know one thing: each time I stoop and place my ear to the ground, new voices have joined the others. That's why I know that the great day is not far off."

"And can't anything be done so that the day arrives sooner?"

"Sure. There are many, many people who don't know yet how well things are for the other people, and how poorly things are going for themselves even though they work like animals and never ask why their honest work is rewarded with crumbs. The truth must be revealed to these poor blind people, and this isn't easy because the poor people are so exhausted from their daily work that they can hardly think for themselves, and the rich people do all they can so that the questions don't grow in the heads of the poor people and they can't wake up. This is the reason why they fight against those who ask the question 'why.' You've already experienced and felt that in your own body, little Paul, isn't that right?"

"Then I should nevertheless keep on asking questions?"

"Yes, little Paul, but it's useless to ask the rich people. They don't give answers because then they would have to say yes—the world is so bad for the poor people because we the rich are greedy, egoistic, and malicious, and nobody is willing to say that about himself. However, go to the poor people and ask them: Why are you eating dry bread when you do honest work, and the idle rich people eat

cake? Why are your children pale, lean, and sick while the rich are rosy, plump, and healthy? Why is it that the end of a long hard-working life is the poorhouse for you, while the idle elderly rich are well cared for and generously rest well from their idleness? You must ask the poor people all this so often and so long repeatedly until the question finally springs up in their heads like a hammer that pounds against the building of injustice and smashes it to pieces. Are you willing to do this, little Paul?"

"Yes," responded the boy with glistening eyes.

The gentle dryad kissed his forehead and said in a more serious vein: "You're going to have a difficult life, little Paul. The rich people, who worry about their stolen loot, will use violent tactics against you. They'll want to strangle the question on your lips, and when you are older, they'll want to throw you into jail so that nobody will hear your voice. However, you must not lose your courage, because it is futile to stop the question that has been born with you. You've been predestined to ask questions for thousands of people who today are still silent. But you will also find comrades, friends, who will not let you down."

The dryad nodded to the boy with a smile. She fluttered quietly up to a branch of the birch tree and settled down.

"Are you going away already?" Paul asked sadly.

"You must go home, little Paul. But you may return here as often as you like, and I'll console and help you."

"Wait a second," Paul asked. "The owl talked about eighty years. She said she would be able to give me the answer only after eighty years had passed. Eighty years are a long time. Was the owl correct?"

"That depends on you humans," responded the silvery voice of the honest dryad. "Perhaps you humans will need eighty years to

become smart. Perhaps, when you, your comrades and you, don't stop asking questions, only fifty. The great day of freedom and happiness can also come in twenty or ten years. Perhaps even tomorrow."

All at once, the dryad disappeared inside the tree. Yet, bright, happy voices now called out to little Paul from all the trees: "Tomorrow! Tomorrow! Tomorrow!"

3 ■ The Rose Bush (1922)

The rose bush did not know where it had been born and where it had passed its early days: it is well known that flowers have a bad memory; on the other hand, they can look into the future. When the rose bush became conscious of itself for the first time, it was standing in the middle of a glorious green lawn. On one side, it looked out at a massive white stone house that glimmered through the branches of a large linden tree, and on the other side there was a tall lattice, and the rose bush could look through its bars out onto the street.

A thin, tall man took care of the rose bush. He carried fertilizer to the bush, tied the hanging branches with raffia, and brought water in a watering can in order to soak the thirsty roots of the rose bush, which was grateful to the man for his care. When the buds that covered the bush began to bloom and exquisite fragrant roses appeared, the bush spoke to its friend: "You have made a great effort on my behalf, and I owe you a debt of gratitude. Indeed, thanks to you I've become quite beautiful. So, take some of my loveliest flowers as thanks."

The man shook his head. "I know you mean well, dear rose bush, and I'd very much like to take some of your loveliest blossoms for my sick wife with me. But I'm not allowed to do this. You don't belong to me."

"I don't belong to you?" the rose bush said in astonishment. "I don't belong to the man who has gone to so much trouble for me and taken great pains with me?"

The man pointed with his hand to the glimmering white house through the tall trees and responded: "You belong to the elegant lady who lives over there."

"That can't be," the rose bush replied. "I've never seen the lady. She's not the one who has sprinkled water on me, loosened the soil at my roots, and bound together my twigs. So how can I belong to her?"

"She is the one who bought you."

"That's something different. Then the poor woman must have worked hard to save so much money. Good! Half of my blossoms will belong to her."

The man smiled a little sadly and said, "Oh, dear rose bush, you don't know how things are in the world yet. I can see that. The lady didn't lift a finger to earn the money."

"How did she get it then?

"She owns a large factory in which numerous workers slave the day away. That is how she's become so wealthy."

The rose bush became angry, lifted a branch up high, and threatened the man with its thorny claws.

"I see that you are making fun of me!" it shouted. "You're doing this just because I'm still young and inexperienced and don't know my way around in the world of people. I'm not so stupid. I have observed ants and bees and know that whoever works hard gets to keep whatever they have worked for."

"That may be true among bees and ants," the man sighed deeply, "but it is different among humans. There people receive just enough

to keep them from starving. Everything else belongs to the masters. They build splendid mansions, plant lovely gardens, and buy flowers.

"Is that really true?"

"Yes."

The man went back to his work, and the rose bush began to reflect about all that they had discussed. Yet, the longer it thought about all this, the worse its mood grew. Indeed, even though it usually had good manners, it spoke rudely to a bee who wanted to visit. The bee was still young and timid and flew off in fright as fast as his wings could carry him. Consequently, the rose bush was sorry for its rude behavior because it was generally friendly and also because it might have asked the bee whether the man had spoken the truth.

While it was so engrossed in thought, someone suddenly shook it and a mischievous voice asked, "Well, my friend, what are you dreaming about?"

The rose bush looked up with its many eyes and recognized the wind, which stood laughing before it and shaking his head so that his long hair flew about.

"Wind, dear wind!" the rose bush was glad to see him and exclaimed, "You're just the spirit I wanted. Tell me whether the old man has spoken the truth."

And then, the rose bush reported everything that the man had told it. In turn, the wind quickly became serious and whistled through his teeth so vigorously that the rose bush's branches began to tremble.

"Yes," the wind bellowed, "everything he told you is true, and even worse. I come here from all over the world where I see every-

thing and am so overcome by anger that I begin to rage. Then the dumb people say, 'What a storm!'"

"Do you mean that the rich people can really buy anything they want?"

"Yes," the wind grumbled. Then suddenly he laughed. "Not me. They can't catch and hold on to me. I'm the friend of the poor. I fly to all the countries. In the big cities, I settle down in front of cellars that have an awful stench and roar into them: 'Freedom! Justice!' Meanwhile, I sing a lullaby to overworked people: 'Keep up your courage and stay together. Fight and you will win!' Then they feel new strength, for they realize that a comrade has spoken to them."

The wind tittered, and all the leaves in the garden stirred. "The rich people would like to throw me into prison because I carry this message, but I couldn't care less. During the night, I rattle their windows so that they become frightened in their soft beds, and then I cry out: 'Look out, you idlers, your time is over! Make room for the workers of the world!' When they hear this, they become frightened and draw their silken covers over their ears and try to get over it and console themselves by saying: 'It was only the wind.'"

The wind lifted one of his legs high and smashed it against the glittering splendid white house. The windows clattered. Many things in the house were broken. A woman's voice shrieked. The wind laughed, then drew his leg back, and said to the rose bush: "You can also do something, you flowers. Don't bloom for the rich idlers. Also, the fruit trees could stop bearing fruit. However, you're nothing but foolish things, and vain as well. Look at the tulips that stand up so erect all day and say nothing but 'How lovely we are!' They have no meaningful interests."

Upon hearing this, the petals of the rose bush blushed a deeper red because it was so deeply ashamed of the other flowers. The wind noticed this and tried to comfort it. "You appear to be a sensible, kind-hearted bush. I shall visit you often. Give me one of your petals as a parting gift."

He took a deep red petal from a full-grown rose. "Be happy. Now, I must leave."

Just then, two poorly dressed pale children came along the street. They stopped before the gate and exclaimed as though in one voice, "Oh, the beautiful roses!"

The little girl stretched her hands longingly toward the blossoms.

"Wind, dear wind," the rose bush cried out as loud as it could, "Before you fly away, break off two of my loveliest roses and throw them to the children. But be careful that the petals don't drop off."

"Do you think I'm that clumsy?" the wind felt insulted and grumbled as he broke off two beautiful roses and blew them lightly and gently to the children.

The children shouted with glee. The wind flew away, and the rose bush enjoyed the happiness of the children. However, its pleasure did not last long, for an angry voice scolded the children.

"How dare you steal flowers from my garden, you impudent children!"

The rose bush watched a lady in a silk dress with her fingers covered by rings threaten the children. Her smooth face was red with anger. The children were frightened and ran off crying.

The rose bush breathed deeply in outrage, and it blew a sweet aroma toward the lady's face. As the lady stepped closer, she said,

"Ah, the beautiful roses. I had better pick them before the rabble from the streets steals them, especially because they are such an expensive kind."

When it heard this, the rose bush became enraged, and its blossoms blazed a fiery red. "If only I were as strong as the wind," it thought. "I would grab this evil woman and shake her so that she would become deaf and blind. Such a nasty creature has a whole garden full of the most gorgeous flowers and won't even begrudge the children two paltry roses. But you will not have any of my blossoms at all, you malicious woman, just wait."

And as the woman bent down to pick the flowers, the rose bush hit her in the face with a branch, stretching out all its thorns like a cat stretches out its claws, and scratched up the woman's face causing her to scream. Still, the woman did not want to abandon her task, but the rose bush was just as willful as she was. Wherever the woman's hand reached, a large thorn sprang out and scratched her until she bled. At last, the woman had to turn back home with torn clothes and dirty scratched hands.

The rose bush was completely exhausted from the heated struggle. Its many green arms hung limply. Its flowers were paler. It sighed softly. Still, despite the stress, it was able to mull things over and arrived at a major decision.

Later in the evening, the wind came flying to bid the rose bush good night, and the rose bush said to him solemnly, "Listen to me, brother wind, I want to follow your advice. I don't want to bloom for the idlers anymore."

The wind caressed the leaves and flowers of the rose bush with gentle hands and said earnestly, "Poor little rose bush, will you have the strength for that? You will have to suffer a great deal."

"Yes," replied the rose bush. "I know it. However, I will have the strength. Only you must come every day and sing your song of freedom to renew my courage as always."

The wind promised to do this.

Soon after this, bad days for the rose bush followed, because it decided not to drink water anymore so that it could stop blooming. When its friend, the old man, came with the watering can, it drew its little roots close to itself so that no drops might touch them. Ah, how it suffered! It thought it might faint. During the day, the sun shone, and it became thirstier every hour, always longing for more water. And, at last, as evening came, it longed for a drink of water, but it did not dare to have a single sip. It had to turn away from the cool precious liquid to thirst again. After a while, it thought it could not endure it. However, the wind came flying, fanning it with a cool breeze, singing softly and gently, "Be brave, be brave! You will be victorious!"

Day after day, the rose bush gazed at the glistening white house in which people were living who had everything they wanted, and it looked at the street where others passed by with thin, pale faces that were tired and sad, and this brought new strength to its heart.

The rose bush grew constantly sicker and weaker. Its arms hung down feebly. Its blossoms dropped their petals. Its leaves became wrinkled and yellow. The old man who tended the bush watched it sadly and asked, "What is wrong, my poor rose bush?" In addition, he tried every remedy he knew to help it. However, it was all in vain.

One morning, instead of a beautiful blooming rose bush, he found a miserable, dying bush. It could not remain there, for the withered branches and flowers spoiled the beautiful garden. The

refined lady gave orders to have the rose bush thrown out. As the man dug her up, the rose bush gathered its remaining strength and whispered beseechingly, "Take me home! Please, please, take me to your home!"

The man fulfilled its wish. He planted the rose bush in a flowerpot and took it to the poor, small room where he lived. His sick wife sat up in bed and said, "Ah, the poor rose bush, it's as sick as I am, but you will nurse us both back to health."

The withered leaves and twigs moaned, "Water! Water!" And the man understood them and brought inside a jar of water. The rose bush drank. What a delight it was! Eagerly, its roots sucked up the water, and the delicious moisture passing through all its branches gave it new life. The next morning it could lift up its branches. The sick woman rejoiced and cried, "The rose bush will get well!"

And the rose bush really got well. In a short time, it again became so beautiful that the poor little room smelled as fragrant as a garden. The pale cheeks of the woman became rosier every day. Her strength returned.

"The rose bush has made me well," she said, and all the flowers on the rose bush glowed deep red with joy when it heard these words.

The man and his wife were kind people. They gladly shared the little they had and carefully broke off some roses to bring joy to tired people in other lonely rooms. The roses had other magic powers. The rose bush, in its days of struggling and suffering, had learned the songs of the wind. Now its flowers sang them very softly for their friends, "Stay together! Fight! Victory will be yours!"

Then the people said, "How strange! The perfume of these

roses brings us new strength. We will fight together for a better world."

Meanwhile, the roses sang to the little children in a tender, loving voice: "Little children, when you are grown up, you will no longer stand sadly before the gate. The whole world will belong to those who work, the whole world!"

4 ■ Ali, the Carpet Weaver (1923)

Many, many years ago, a poor man named Ali lived in a distant land. He earned his living by weaving rugs and carpets. However, things did not go well for him for different reasons. One reason above all was that he owned only one old, broken-down loom, which he had inherited from his father, and the carpets that he made on this loom all had mistakes and faults so that nobody at all wanted to buy them. Poor Ali worked extremely hard the entire day, and if his only concern was to take care of himself, he would have managed with his paltry earnings. However, no, this was not the case! He had seven children with eternally hungry stomachs, and Fatima, his wife, was always sick and could not earn anything.

The family was so poor that they did not even live in a house. They all lived in a large cave near the seashore and did not have shoes or chairs, not even an oven. Of course, they didn't need an oven because they had to satisfy themselves mainly with dry bread.

One evening, poor Ali ambled along the seashore sadder than ever. His youngest daughter, Aischa, was sick and was supposed to drink fresh milk every day.

"Where am I to get the milk?" Ali sighed pitifully. "My neighbor has ten cows, but he won't give us even a small drop of the milk. My dear child may have to die because I am poor."

And large tears flowed down his cheeks.

He did not dare to go home because it would be much too painful to see little Aischa lying on an old rug completely pale and weak and not be able to help her. As he was walking in despair, he saw a gigantic fish lying on the sand. It was pitifully moving its gills and vainly tried to return to the water.

"Poor fish," Ali said. "I know how you feel. Wait, I'll carry you into the water."

Indeed, he carefully picked up the fish and brought it to the water. Then the fish disappeared beneath the water, which splashed high into the air and then covered Ali's bare feet. Because it had begun to get dark already, Ali decided to return home, with a heavy heart. As he turned away from the sea, he suddenly heard a powerful voice that seemed to come from the clouds.

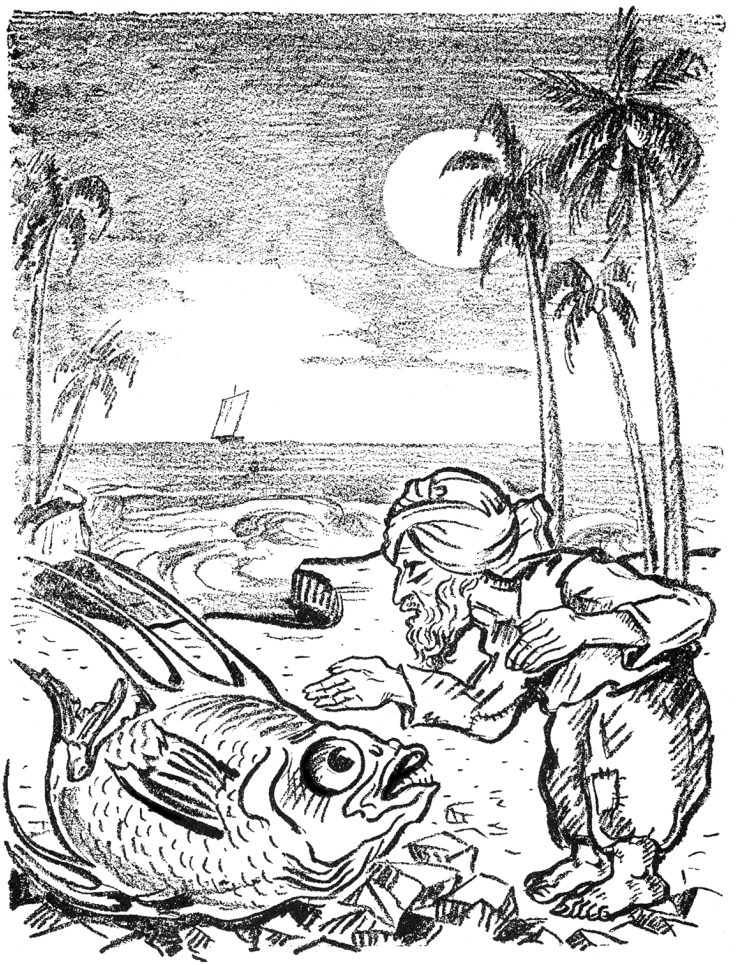
"Remain standing, mortal!" the voice exclaimed. "I owe you my thanks!"

Ali was horrified and turned around, but he couldn't see anyone. Anxiously, he stammered, "Who's speaking to me, and who owes me thanks? I'm nothing but a poor helpless man."

"In spite of your worries and sadness you've thought about caring for others and have taken pity on that poor fish. I want you to know, mortal, that I am a good spirit who was defeated in a fight with an evil spirit and flung onto dry land as a fish. You have saved my life. In gratitude, you will now have as much money as you earn and deserve from your honest hard work for the rest of your life."

Poor Ali let out a long sigh: "Oh, good spirit, if this is the case, my entire life will be filled with misery, for I work from morning until late at night and don't earn enough to protect my children from starvation."

"You've misunderstood me, mortal. I didn't say as much as your honest work earns right now; rather I said as much money as you



earn and deserve. Go home. You'll find everything that befits a man who does honest work."

Ali was completely dazzled. He thought that he might be dreaming and wondered whether all his worries had completely bewildered his mind. He began to run and was eager to tell his wife all about this strange incident. However, when he reached the cave, he became even more confused. He could not believe his eyes! The cave had disappeared, and in its place stood a beautiful small house surrounded by a garden. In the garden, there was a large green lawn, and a snow-white cow was grazing there. Ali stood rooted to the spot and did not dare to move. Then his wife emerged from the house, and Ali was astonished once more. Fatima was no longer wrapped in rags. Instead, she wore a colorful dress, and her face, which always used to be worn out, was now glowing with joy.

"Come quickly into the house, my dear husband!" she cried with a happy voice. "A great miracle has happened. I was sitting with our child and at my wits' end, when all of a sudden, I heard a terrible clash of thunder, and I fell unconscious. When I came to my senses again, our miserable cave had disappeared. I sat in a clean and beautiful room, and our sick child lay in a clean white bed."

"The good spirit has done all this," Ali spoke with his heart full of gratitude, and then he told his wife what had happened. They entered the house, and Ali found not only beautiful and clean rooms and a kitchen with dishware and pans and a pantry but also a brand-new, splendid loom, which stood beside the old, broken-down one.

"It is too much luck!" Fatima cried out as she stood at the stove and cooked. "We don't deserve it."

"On the contrary," Ali responded and thought thankfully about the words of the good spirit. "Don't forget that I've now worked

fifteen long years the entire day. It's only right and proper that we live like normal human beings from the earnings of my work. Now I'll work twice as hard."

The next morning Ali got up early and sat down next to the new loom. He found that he could do the work exceedingly easily. He felt deeply happy in his heart, and the work was a blessing. Meanwhile, little Aischa had finished drinking a glass of fresh milk, and her pale little face already began to turn red. Fatima had also found clothes for the other children in a closet, so now the entire family looked clean and neat.

After Ali had woven the first rug on the new loom, he laughed aloud out of joy. He had never managed to weave such a beautiful rug. Also, on the same day, the rich Hassan came by to see Ali, and when he saw the rug, he praised Ali very much, purchased the rug, and ordered three other carpets because his oldest daughter was soon going to celebrate her marriage, and he wanted to give her the carpets as gifts. From this time on, things went well for Ali. He worked hard and earned enough so that the entire family could live well. Fatima was a frugal woman and put aside a fair amount of money.

One day, she said to her husband, "Since so many people are ordering rugs from you, it's clear that you can't manage all the work. I've saved some money, and we can buy a second loom. After that, you can hire lame Youseff to work beside you. He'll be happy to find work."

Ali was pleased by this suggestion, and they bought the second loom. However, there was a small argument between Ali and his wife.

"How much will you pay Youseff?" his wife asked.

"The exact same amount that I earn from my work."

"The entire amount!" exclaimed his wife. "Then nothing will be left over for you."

"Youseff will work the same amount of time as I do. So it's only right that he receive what I do."

"This way you'll never become rich," his wife sighed and continued asking questions. "Where will Youseff live?"

"In the room that overlooks the garden."

"What? In that good room? Let him live in the small room near the cellar."

"Youseff will work just as much as me. Therefore, it's only right that he lives just as well as I do," Ali answered in a severe voice.

His wife kept quiet, but her heart was filled with rage because she loved money.

So lame Youseff came to work with Ali, and for a while, everything went well. Then one day Fatima said to Ali, "Sliman, rich Hassan's son, has asked our eldest daughter to marry him. This is a great honor for us because Hassan is the wealthiest man in the city. But Hassan won't allow Sliman to marry unless our daughter has a large dowry."

Ali scratched his head and said, "Where can I obtain a large dowry for our daughter?"

"If you stop giving Youseff his entire earnings of his work and keep approximately a fourth for yourself," his wife spoke while flattering him, "then we'd soon have enough for the dowry."

Ali thought about this and finally said, "You are right. Youseff doesn't have a wife or a child, and he can easily live off three-quarters of his earnings."

And from then on, Youseff, who was a hard worker, received only three-quarters from the money that he earned.

After some months passed, Fatima spoke to her husband once

more: "We've now become refined people and are related to the rich Hassan, so it's not suitable for us to live in such a pathetic small house. You should build a beautiful large house in the city."

Ali became disgruntled, shook his head, and said, "We don't have enough money."

"But you sell so many rugs and carpets."

"Yes, but I don't do this by myself. You forget that Youseff receives three-quarters of his earnings."

"I've always told you that's too much!" his wife exclaimed angrily. "Give him just half. Then we can build the house."

"That wouldn't be right," Ali responded. "He works just as much as I do."

"But the loom belongs to you. If Youseff didn't have this loom, he wouldn't be able to work at all. He has the loom for nothing. You really have a right to take fifty percent of the earnings."

"That sounds very reasonable," Ali mulled this over thoughtfully.

From then on, Fatima tormented him every day from morning to night until he became tired and gave in to her.

Consequently, Youseff received now only half from what he earned, even though he worked just as much as he did before.

Ali had a beautiful house built, and the whole family moved in. Now, joy and good cheer reigned in the house for some time. Ali kept his old, small house and went there every morning, where he wove until the evening. However, he soon stopped going there so early and arrived at eight instead of six. Nevertheless, he demanded that Youseff begin his work punctually at six.

After some months passed, Fatima became moody and grumpy. Ali suspected quickly that she had a new wish in her heart, and he was right, for one evening, she began to talk: "My dear husband, I must say something to you. Your daughter and her rich

husband finally came to visit me and said: 'It is really embarrassing that father sits at his loom the entire day like a common worker. The entire city laughs at him, and we feel ashamed of him. Other rich people stroll around the city, sit in cafés, and ride on splendid horses through the streets. Tell father, dear mother, that he should be leading a life more appropriate for a rich and refined gentleman.'"

When Ali heard this from Fatima, he kept quiet for a moment. Then he said, "You are right, Fatima. Actually, I've become tired from so much work. But is the loom to stand empty? Indeed, I must continue earning a good deal because living in the new house costs a good deal of money."

"You could have someone else sit at your loom. If you give him only a fourth of his earnings, you'll gain a nice profit and won't have to torment yourself anymore."

Ali nodded his head but was worried.

"I won't be able to find anyone for such a low salary."

"Certainly you will," his wife responded. The poor fellow Rashid lives in the nearby alley. His wife is sick, and they have nine children. He is so distressed that he will work for any wages, and he is a skillful weaver."

"How smart you are!" Ali cried happily. "Tomorrow I'll look for Rashid."

"Wait," Fatima said. "If Rashid learns that Youseff receives more money than he will, he'll become dissatisfied. From now on, you must pay Youseff only a fourth of his earnings."

"Then he'll stop working."

"No, he won't. Times are bad, and he won't find work anywhere."

Already on the next day, Rashid and Youseff began working with the looms, and both received only a fourth of their earnings.

Meanwhile, Ali and his family continued to live a luxurious life and were happy.

However, one day Fatima said to her husband, "Mohammed, the gold smith had a wonderful pearl necklace. You must buy it for me because all rich refined women wear pearl necklaces. I am the only one who runs around with a bare neck. Buy a pearl necklace for me, dear husband."

"No," Ali said angrily. "You are too demanding."

Fatima began to weep. "I've starved and suffered because of you, and yet, I've always been a faithful wife. And now, you won't give me the pleasure of having this small gift."

"I don't have any money for such useless things."

"If I would tell you where you can get the money for this, would you then buy the pearl necklace for me?"

"Yes."

"Listen then," she said. "Youseff and Rashid work until six in the evening, and they also rest two hours at noon, the lazy fellows. Because of this, a good deal of money escapes you. Order them to work until eight in the evening and to rest for only one hour at noon. Then you will soon get together the money for the pearl necklace."

"Don't you think that the two of them will become tired when they work so long?"

"What does that matter to you? The looms belong to you. The two of them should just be happy that they have work. What is a weaver without a loom? Besides, these common people are strong and don't tire easily."

Ali followed his wife's advice. From then on, Youseff and Rashid worked from six in the morning until eight in the evening and were allowed to rest for merely an hour at noon. During these years,

there had been a crop failure. So when winter came, food had become extremely scarce and expensive. Youseff could not get by on his paltry salary, and of course, it was even worse with Rashid and his nine hungry children. Consequently, the two of them decided to paint a picture of their misery for Ali and to demand a higher salary.

In the evening, Ali always came to examine what the two men had woven during the day. He rode on a splendid horse and was dressed in satin and silk clothes and held a riding whip. The knob was made out of precious gems.

Youseff and Rashid described their sad situation to him and asked him politely to raise their wages. However, Ali became furious and yelled at them, "What a nerve you two have! I see that you want to live a life of kings and do nothing! No way will I help you! I can find dozens of men like you on the street. Without my looms, you two would be lost. As punishment for your impudence, you will now receive just an eighth of your earnings beginning tomorrow."

"Then I'll have to starve with my children," Rashid spoke sadly.

"We work the entire day," Youseff joined in, "and receive so little money that we can't live from it. Meanwhile, you do nothing the entire day and live in splendor and happiness. Is that fair?"

Then Ali became enraged, hit lame Youseff with his riding whip, and bellowed: "I'm going to take you to court, and the judge will sentence you to be hanged because you've dared to say such words to me."

After he left them, he mounted his horse and rode home. However, he did not get very far. His horse stopped abruptly and its body started to tremble all over. Right at that moment, a fearsome voice burst forth from the clouds: "Ali! Ali!"

Ali recognized the voice and the good spirit. Immediately, he asked, "What do you want from me?"

"What have you done with my gifts, you miserable man?" the voice thundered.

"I've used them to become a rich, highly respected man through thrift."

"Wrong! You've become a thief and an exploiter! You exploit Youseff and Rashid and live off their work. You're worse than a murderer!"

"I own the looms, and I let Rashid and Youseff work with them out of generosity."

"Liar! Murderer!" the spirit thundered. "I've been patiently watching all your conniving for a long time, and I always believed that one day you would develop a good conscience. However, I've now realized just how bad you are. You must suffer the just punishment. You must die!"

As soon as the spirit said this, a terrible flash of lightning shot down from the sky and struck Ali in his heart so that he fell dead to the ground. At the same time, Ali's splendid house in the city collapsed, and Fatima was buried in the rubble. Meanwhile, Ali's children escaped. However, they turned out to be like their parents and also became evil people, thieves, and exploiters, and since they had many children and grandchildren, their lineage has not died out even today.

People have not heard anything about the good spirit for some time. He may have gone to another world. Meanwhile, thousands and millions of people continue to share Youseff's and Rashid's fate. Sometimes, people hear the rumbling of the good spirit's voice in the distance. This means that he will soon appear on our earth and sit in judgment on Ali's future generations.

5 ■ The Glasses (1923)

Once upon a time, there was a large, rich country where law and order were the rule. Even though the people were divided into rich and poor, and even though the rich exploited the poor, there was never a word of complaint to be heard, much less gripes and threats. The king sat on his golden throne, fat, flabby, and content. The wealthy citizens were fat, flabby, and content in their beautiful homes. And the poor people worked diligently twelve hours a day in the fields and factories, and if they did not get enough to eat or did not earn enough, they appeared not to notice it.

There was a good reason for all this. Hundreds of years ago, an evil magician who was the king's friend lived in this country. This magician could see into the future, and he realized that the poor people would not let themselves be treated like animals forever. One day, they would demand their rights, and then the glory of the kings and wealthy citizens would end. Therefore, he wanted to prevent all this from happening. So for the rest of his life, the magician sat in his laboratory, where he cut glass into small round pieces. He tinted the glass with different colors and made them into eyeglasses. Then he told the king that he and his heirs were to order all newborn babies to wear glasses immediately after birth, never to be taken off, or else they would be sentenced to death.

Numerous glasses were stored in an enormous room, wrapped in special protective covers. A descendant of the magician was

placed in charge there, and he was informed each time a child was born. He then selected the appropriate glasses and even placed them on the little nose of the child, or he had one of his underlings take care of it.

There were different kinds of glasses. The most complicated were those the children of the poor people had to wear. The old magician had to work nearly fifty years before he could make them exactly right. The lenses were cut in such a way that the poor people who wore them saw their brothers and sisters as small, helpless, inferior creatures. However, if they looked at the wealthy citizens and at the king, such people were magnified as powerful, clearly godlike creatures who deserved all of the best things in the world—people whose power was irresistible and who had the right to make all other people into their servants. The old magician had found it extremely difficult to invent the right tint for the lenses because they had to give their wearers the impression that their miserable homes were very comfortable and beautiful whenever they looked at them. On the other hand, the glasses also had to prevent them from recognizing the splendor and glory of the wealthy people's mansions and gardens or the king's castles and parks when they passed by; otherwise, the poor people would ultimately become discontent.

It had been easier for the magician to make the glasses for the wealthy citizens. Here, he merely mixed a little gold or silver with the glass so that the citizens always saw gold and silver but never living creatures, no matter where they looked. The lenses were cut in such a way that the workers seemed to be machines for the exclusive use of the wealthy citizens.

The glasses for the king gave the magician no trouble at all. They did not even have to be cut. He just dipped them once in the blood

of the cruelest person who had ever lived and twice in the blood of the stupidest person who had ever lived. When the king wore the glasses, he saw whatever kings are accustomed to seeing, and he saw it in the way that suited all kings.

There were also a small number of large, rose-colored glasses, which were very rarely used. In the three centuries since the death of the old magician, his descendants had needed to use them only three times. These glasses had been made for those remarkable people whose eyes saw something of reality in spite of the customary glasses.

For instance, there was once a young poet who had led a splendid life in the castle, and as court poet he was full of joy. All of the citizens respected and honored him. He wrote beautiful poems in praise of the king and his wise government, and he also wrote cheerful songs for the citizens and praised their virtues. One would have thought that the young poet was the happiest man in the world, and in fact, he did see only the bright side of the world through his silver glasses. Of course, despite all of their respect for the young poet, the citizens were somewhat disturbed that he had not become as soft and flabby as they were. However, because he was a poet, they forgave him.

One day, the poet lost his way in the poor district of the city. It was a glorious summer day, and the sun was so hot that the silver of his glasses melted. With one eye the poet saw reality, and it horrified him so much that he uttered a great cry. He saw tired, hard-working men, haggard, sick women, and emaciated, starving children. It seemed to him that he was the only person to have seen this until then, and he had to make it all known. He ran to the citizens, crying and burying his head in his hands, all the while telling them about the terrible things he had seen. They laughed and

thought that the heat had made him go crazy. Then he looked up at them, and his one eye saw the reality. He yelled at the citizens, "Thieves! Murderers!" and he raced to the king, for he hoped to find help there. However, when he glimpsed the king sitting on his throne, he was forced to shout, "You wicked, cruel fool! What right do you have to sit on the throne?"

The king had the poet put in chains and carried away.

The young man would certainly have been executed if the magician, the keeper of the glasses, had not put in a good word for him and explained to the king how the damage had been done. So the raving poet was dragged before the magician, who placed some rose-colored glasses on his nose and said, "Your old glasses were ruined, my friend. That's why you thought you saw such horrible things. Go now onto the streets, look around you, and you will realize your mistake."

The poet obeyed, and now everything seemed to be good and beautiful through his rose-colored glasses. Poverty appeared to be something holy and splendid, and he thought to himself: "Work ennobles the people and makes them honorable—how lucky are those who are free to work and ennoble themselves twelve hours a day." Once again, he recognized the citizens as virtuous friends, and when he reappeared before the king, he was dazzled by his majesty, and he sank to his knees in awe.

After that incident, there were many, many years of law and order again. However, when the young poet became an old poet and lay on his deathbed, he took the glasses from his weak eyes, and for a brief moment, he believed that he saw again what he had seen on that summer day. A young maid nursed him faithfully and sat by his bedside. The poet grasped her hand and stammered, "The glasses, take them off and see!"

Then he died.

The young maid went home and thought about what the poet had said, and she was somewhat confused. To be sure, she had not understood the words of the dying man because the glasses affected not only the eyes but also the minds of those who wore them. However, she always remembered the poet's words and sometimes asked herself in secret how the world might look if she were to take off her glasses.

Soon thereafter, she married a shoemaker, and when their first child was born, a splendid little boy, she saw his shining eyes and recalled the words of the poet. Then she felt it a shame that those beautiful eyes had to be concealed behind some ugly glasses. Still, there was nothing one could do. The magician came, placed some glasses on little Fritz's nose, and everything was in order.

However, something strange happened. Little Fritz could not stand the glasses and tried repeatedly to take them off, so the parents lived in constant fear that he might succeed one time. He might run into the streets without his glasses, be caught by the guardians of order, and executed according to the laws of the land. All of their pleas and threats were in vain. As soon as Fritz was alone, he tore and yanked at the repulsive glasses that were ingeniously tied to the back of his head.

As the boy grew up, he succeeded at times in tearing off the glasses, and his horrified eyes saw terrible things: on the one hand, there was misery, need, and helplessness; on the other, there was wealth, comfort, splendor, and injustice. However, he caught only a glimpse of this because his mother or sister would always come running after him when he took off his glasses. They scolded, pleaded, and cried until he put his glasses on again.

Still, the little he saw was enough to arouse great sadness and

anger in the boy. He constantly thought of ways to rid the world of the injustice he perceived, and finally he became convinced that the glasses were responsible for everything. If his friends and comrades were to look at the world without glasses, they would realize that they were being wronged, and they would also see that they were not at all as weak and helpless as their glasses made it seem.

So one day, while his father was working in the shop and his mother and sister were in the kitchen, Fritz tore off his glasses, threw them on the ground, and trampled them into a thousand pieces. At first, his new-seeing eyes were stunned by what they saw, as if he had been hit on the head. However, soon a fire began to flare up in his heart and completely consumed him. He swore not to relax or rest until his friends had taken off their glasses, too, and really began to see.

But first, it was important to conceal his deed from the citizens and the king. Consequently, Fritz tied a black cloth around his eyes and explained that the light hurt them. The citizens were satisfied with this explanation because they believed that it was even more difficult to see through a black cloth than through the glasses.

When the darkness of the night protected him, Fritz slipped outside and visited his friends. He told them what he saw and encouraged them to throw away their glasses. At first, they laughed at him. However, after he was able to convince a few of them to take off their glasses for a brief time, they took his side. As the days passed, there were more and more who took off their glasses, until three-quarters of the workers finally belonged to the "enemies of the glasses."

One day, the "enemies of the glasses" armed themselves and were ready to give their all. They marched forth, invaded the houses of the wealthy citizens, and demanded their rights from the king in

his palace. The king became so horrified that he rushed into the street and began to run. He ran and ran until he came to a country where the people still wore glasses and where law and order prevailed. Back in his kingdom, the wealthy citizens resisted at first; but once they were no longer wearing glasses, they recognized that the power of the "enemies of the glasses" was strong, and they realized that they themselves were wretched, stupid, and wicked. They grumbled, and their hearts were filled with anger as they were forced to obey the commands of the "enemies of the glasses."

However, real order was created in the country now. Whoever worked earned sufficient money. Whoever was idle received nothing. The children and the old and sick people were all looked after, and nobody received more than his due.

The country where all this took place is in the east, where the sun rises. Perhaps the sun is brighter there, and the people have learned to see more quickly than the people in other countries do. Yet, we all know how fast light can travel, and it will travel to the other countries, and the people will smash their glasses. Once they have really learned to see, then they will act accordingly. In the countries where darkness still reigns, each person must do his part. Everyone must rip off the glasses, break them, and tell the others what he has seen, and he must recruit "enemies of the glasses" until their number is so great that they can become masters of a happy and free world.

6 ■ The Servant (1923)

Once upon a time, there was a small village at the foot of a huge mountain deep in the wilderness, somewhat isolated from the rest of the world. The tiny village was poor. Icy winds roared down from the mountain and killed everything that was planted in the region. Moreover, the fields of the villagers were sandy and unfertile, so living conditions were dreadful. Only one thing was plentiful—wood. There was more than enough wood. Gigantic trees grew on the side of the mountain, and on the other side of the village there was an endless forest. The villagers chopped down the trees, sold the beautiful thick logs to the world outside, and obtained just what they needed to exist.

This work was hard. When the men cut the trees in the boiling summer, the heat practically killed them. When they dragged the logs on their sledges in the chilly winter, their hands and feet froze. All this terribly hard work made them sullen and bad-tempered, and one rarely heard a happy laugh or cheerful word in the little village.

In the middle of the forest, there was a cabin, the home of an old man and his son. The villagers were frightened of the man. They thought he was a magician because the cabin was filled with strange instruments, and the man worked day and night on a tremendously large thing that seemed to move by itself. It puffed out steam and rumbled loudly. The children were scared of the cabin,

and even the grown-ups avoided the magician, for they were afraid that he could do them some harm. However, they were unfair to the magician, for he was actually a good and clever man who was touched deeply by the misery of his fellow creatures. He wanted to help them so that they would not have to work so terribly hard. He saw how much trouble it was to cut the thick logs with a paltry tiny saw. He saw how the men had to drudge, how laborious the work was, and he made up his mind to invent a machine that would be so easy to handle that even a small child could work it.

The magician toiled many, many years in his cabin. By the time his work was finally finished, he had become gray and old. He looked at the machine with great joy, folded his trembling hands in his lap, and told his son to call the men of the village to their cabin. Since their curiosity was greater than their fear, the men came. When they were all gathered together, the magician's son carried an enormous oak stump into the room and placed it under the large machine. The magician touched a switch, and the machine began to hum loudly and puff out little white clouds. A gigantic saw fell on the clump of oak wood, moved back and forth a few times—whrrrr, whrrrr, whrrrr, whrrrr and the clump of oak wood split apart as though it were but a thin little branch. The men were astonished, and at first, they stood there speechless, but after a while they began to overwhelm the old magician with questions.

"I've created a servant for you," the old man explained, "and this servant will help you with your work. It's not right when people must work so hard that they have no time to be cheerful. Since the servant can accomplish in a few hours what it takes you entire days to do, you'll have time to play with your children and speak with your wives. You'll no longer have to work as hard as beasts."

And then he showed the men how to use the large saw, and it was so simple that a ten-year-old could understand everything. The men shouted with joy and could scarcely find words enough to thank the magician. However, he raised his hand in warning and spoke some serious words to them.

"I'm giving you this servant as a present, but make sure that the servant does not become your master, for he would be a cruel master and would swallow the lives of your kin and kindred."

The men laughed and cried out, "You want to make fools out of us! How could a lifeless thing made out of iron and leather become the master of living human beings?"

The old magician looked at them with concern and then spoke, "As long as this servant belongs to *all of you*, he will be a good servant and will help you. However, if one day he should belong to *one* person alone, he will become a wicked master. Thus, I want you to promise me that the servant will always belong to the entire village." He turned to his son. "You shall be the guardian of the servant. You shall allow anyone in the village to use it whenever it is needed. As long as you do this faithfully, my blessings as your father shall be with you. If the servant should fall into the hands of a single person through your fault, you and your children and your grandchildren shall be cursed!"

The men promised the old magician that the servant would always remain the property of the entire community and that no one person would dare to keep it for himself alone. However, secretly they laughed at the old man and his warning. "He's already become senile," the eldest of the villagers remarked to the others. "You would think that there's some magic power in the saw that could make it into our master. The old fool!" Even the magician's son did not fully grasp his father's words, and he scoffed at the old man

along with the others. Still, they took good care to conceal their thoughts from the magician, for they were afraid that he might take back his present.

It seemed that the good old magician had lived only to complete his work. Just a few days after he had given the servant as a gift to the men of the village, he lay down and died. However, before he closed his eyes for good, he repeated his warning; his last words were, "Beware that the servant does not become your master!"

Soon happy times arrived for the village. The work that had taken the men many days to complete was done by the servant in a few hours. Since the villagers did not have to work themselves to death to earn a living and could now enjoy some hours of rest, they became cheerful and were in good spirits. Laughter and joking could be heard throughout the village. The people were no longer so tired, and they no longer felt pains in their arms and legs. Consequently, they became kinder and more tender toward one another, and their town became known to everyone in the region as the "happy village." Many people came from distant lands to settle there because it was more beautiful than anywhere else in the world.

The magician's son was a good, simple fellow. He looked after his father's present faithfully and was content because he saw how the village had become happy and prosperous, and he even laughed at times when he thought about his father's warning. The servant worked industriously, huffing and puffing, obeying each and every touch of the hand. How could the old magician have ever believed that this mass of matter could become a master?

Many years passed in happiness. Then one day a stranger appeared in the village. He was dressed in beautiful and elegant clothes, wore a golden chain over his fat stomach, jingled gold

coins in his pockets, and told stories about splendid things he had seen in the great wide world. His arrogance irritated the villagers, and they wanted to prove to him that they were not poor wretches and that they possessed something that nobody else in the world possessed. So they took him to the huge shed they had built for the servant, and they showed him how beautifully and quickly the machine worked. The stranger's eyes and mouth opened wider and wider the longer he looked at the servant. However, he did not say a word but sat down silently in a corner, sunk deep in thought.

That evening, he knocked on the door of the cabin where the magician's son lived, and when he was let in, he explained that he wanted to buy the servant.

"That's impossible," the young man replied. "We had to promise my father never to allow the servant to fall into the hands of a single person."

The stranger drew a handful of gold from his pocket. "Look here. With this, you can travel all over the world. You can become a great man and wear beautiful clothes with a golden chain."

The young man looked sadly at the gold. He would have liked to become a rich, stately man; however, he did not dare break his promise. The stranger spent a long time trying to talk him into it, but the young man remained firm and kept giving the stranger the same answer: "I can't." However, secretly he cursed the folly of his father who had robbed him of this chance make a great fortune.

On the following day, the stranger called all the men of the village together in the large shed, and he threw two large handfuls of gold on the ground and said, "Sell me the servant!"

"We can't!" they cried out unanimously, but some of the men looked greedily at the gold and thought, "The old magician is dead,

and it's impossible for him to know everything we're doing now—why shouldn't we sell the servant?"

"Listen to me," the stranger said, "The servant will remain in your village and continue to work here. Everything will be much better for you than ever before because I'll give you work, and each week you'll receive a salary. You won't have to wait until the wood is transported. I'll take on all your problems, all your burdens, because I care for you. And every week, you'll receive your money. Don't be fools. You see that I'm a good man and only want the best for you."

The oldest villager scratched his ear and looked at the others. Then he walked up to the stranger, looked straight into his eyes, and said, "I see that you're a man to be trusted, a man concerned about the welfare of our village. Allow me to shake your hand."

And he shook the stranger's hand tightly. When he withdrew his hand from the stranger's, the village eldest clenched his fist, for he could already feel the beautiful, hard gold coins in his hand.

Once again, the stranger raised his voice. "Look, men, you are simple inexperienced people. You've always sold the wood for the same price. Yet because of my brains, I understand how to force people to pay much more for the wood than they do now, double, perhaps even triple."

"But," the magician's son exclaimed with concern, "if you just give us the same salary all the time, what benefit do we have when you get more money for the wood?"

The stranger shook his head sadly and responded, "Oh, my poor friends, how ignorant you are! The time will come when nobody will want to buy wood anymore. Then I'll stand there with huge amounts of wood and my pockets empty. In spite of this, you'll continue to take your salaries home each week."

He rubbed the tears from his eyes with a silk handkerchief, and his voice trembled with emotion. "Perhaps I shall become a poor man, but I love people so much, and especially you all, that it doesn't matter to me. I see how much trouble you have in transporting the wood, and I want to relieve you of this burden. It pains my heart when I think that your earnings are so unsteady. I have to give you a steady salary; otherwise, my heart will break." And the noble stranger began to shed bitter tears.

Now, the oldest villager stepped forward and spoke to the men. He declared that the stranger was right and that they were fools if they didn't sell him the servant. This man knew how to persuade the people, and after a short time they all exclaimed, "Let's sell the servant!"

Only the magician's son remained sadly in a corner. His good, simple mind did not know what it was that troubled him, but he was shaking from a terrible fear, and he shouted, "You can't sell the servant. I won't allow it!" And he leaped forward and tried to grab the stranger's throat.

However, the stranger managed to yell, "You see now who your enemy is! I'm offering you a beautiful secure life, and he wants to prevent you from having this! Seize him!"

The men surrounded the young man and held him tightly.

"As long as this wicked man lives here," the stranger continued, "there will be no peace in this village. Send him away, and if he should dare to return, beat him to death!"

The men dragged the magician's son to the outskirts of the village and then drove him with sticks into the forest. The young man cried and screamed wildly, "The servant will become your master! The servant will become your master!"

Soon after the stranger had acquired the servant, he became a

totally different person. No longer did he speak kind words. Instead, he ordered the men about, yelled at them, and never let them have their say. The work was now divided. Some of the men toiled in the large shed, some hauled the logs to the shed, and some had to carry the wood from the village. And this went on from dusk to dawn. If someone became tired or sick and informed the stranger that he couldn't work that day, the stranger would bellow, "Good, then you won't receive your salary." And the sick man would groan and drag himself to work.

At first, despite everything, the men were happy and in good spirits because they received a steady salary each week. But soon they realized that this salary was not enough to live on. The stranger had a mansion built for himself in the village, and many people from the city came and settled in the region. When the mansion was finished, one of the workers approached the stranger and said, "You're a rich man. You must certainly have sold the wood for triple the price. Otherwise, you wouldn't have been able to have this mansion built for yourself. Yet, our salaries have remained the same, and I think that you should now give us triple our salary."

The stranger became furious. He called his twelve armed guards, whom he had brought with him from the city, and he had the worker hung from a tree. The others who saw this became very frightened and no longer dared to say a word, for they had no weapons.

The stranger had a whistle installed in the great steel room where the servant now stood. When this whistle piped shrilly each morning, the men had to rush to work or they would not receive their salaries. One morning when one of the men was still asleep, the whistle shrieked, and his small son shook him until he woke.

Then the boy said anxiously, "Hurry, hurry, father. The master is calling!" The father looked at the small boy in dismay, for he recalled the words of the old magician. That evening, he told his comrades about the incident, and the men sighed and had to admit that the servant had truly become their master, and they were its slaves.

The happy village had become a sad one again. Nobody had time to be nice to anyone else. Nobody laughed any more. Everyone was sullen and tired. The stranger had a tremendous building constructed next to the steel shed. Here matches were made out of wood, and even small children were obliged to work. The women had long since begun working because the families could not live from the meager wages of the men alone.

One day, many men arrived in the village from distant places, and the stranger gave them lodging in two large houses that had been empty for some time. The villagers were astonished and asked why these men had come—they did not look for work and appeared to be waiting for something to happen. This question was soon answered. The stranger called the workers to him, made a sad face, and said, "I have suffered great losses, and because of my concern for your welfare, I've become a poor man. Wood now costs just half of what it used to cost. So I can only give you half your salary from now on."

The workers were horrified and looked at each other. They could hardly live on their salaries as it was, and now they were to receive just half their pay. They would have to starve along with their children. One worker, a young man, stepped forward and yelled so loudly that he became red with rage: "We won't work for half our salary!"

The stranger grinned and sneered. "What do you want to do

then? Do you want to cut the logs with your miserable little saws? Before you've cut up one tree, the servant will have cut ten or more. You can't compete against the servant—and the machine is in my hands!"

Still, the workers were aroused by their furious anger, and they yelled wildly and in confusion: "We won't work! We won't work!"

The stranger's lips formed an evil smile, and he laughed. "Good, I don't need you. The men who recently came to the village will work instead. There's no longer any place for you now!"

The workers rushed forward and wanted to kill the stranger. But he blew a shrill little whistle, and suddenly there were many heavily armed men in the room. They surrounded the workers and tied them up. Then the stranger shouted in a mighty voice to the armed men: "Drive these troublemakers out of the village and guard the borders. Whoever comes near the borders is to be shot on sight!"

And so that is the way things happened. The men were driven into the woods with their wives and children just as they had once driven away the magician's son. As darkness descended, they sank exhausted to the mossy ground, and the women sobbed and cried the entire night. "The servant has become our master! The servant has become our master!"

The next morning, they wandered sadly and moved deeper into the forest. Tired and hungry, they dragged themselves the whole day long. Toward evening, they reached a small cabin, and when they knocked on the door, the magician's son opened it and let them in. He welcomed them with tenderness, gave them beets and bread to eat, and took care of the crying children. The parents related what had happened and complained about their suffering.

"Now everything is lost," an old man moaned. "The servant has

become our master, and we and our children and our grandchildren shall be its slaves forever."

"If only your father had never given us this unholy present!" another man cried. "We are much worse off now than ever before."

However, the magician's son became very serious and said, "Do not slander my father. Whatever he did, he did out of love for you, and his gift was good and useful as long as it belonged to everyone. Only when it fell into the hands of a single person did it become a curse. However, you should not lose heart even now. Think about the times when the servant helped us all. Weren't they happy and wonderful times?"

"Yes, yes!" they all exclaimed and sighed deeply as they thought about the time when their village had been called the "happy village."

"Why did you allow a single person to take over the servant?" a twelve-year-old boy cried. "We children would have believed the words of the magician, and we wouldn't have done that."

The old people became ashamed and silent, but the face of the magician's son glowed and beamed brightly all of a sudden. With a cheerful voice he declared, "During the past years I read a good deal in my father's magic books, and I constantly came across a saying that I had difficulty understanding until now. The saying goes like this:

'Whatever old people throw away, the young will pick up and keep.

'Whatever the old people do wrong, the young will do right.

'The master of the old people will become the servant of the young.'"

For a moment, there was silence in the small cabin. Then all of the children rejoiced and shouted with their fresh young voices,

"We'll make up for everything you've done wrong! Your master will become our servant!"

And the tall serious pine trees rustled softly and whispered, "That's the way, that's the way!"

7 ■ The Troublemakers (1923)

Many, many years ago a group of powerful giants lived on top of a mountain whose peak jutted almost into the heavens. These giants were smart and good-natured people who liked to go hunting and took great pleasure in piling up enormous mountains, in directing rivers into other branches, and in playing all sorts of jokes. One time, a giant by the name of Tworiez broke his leg while jumping over an abyss, and from then on, he had a limp and couldn't participate any longer in the hunts and games of his friends. After this incident, he would sit sadly in front of his cave and was so bored that he was always close to tears.

His wife was very worried when she saw her husband so depressed, and she racked her brains to find something to take her husband's mind off his condition. Finally, she had a good idea. At the foot of the mountain, there was an exceedingly beautiful wide valley, and a vigorous river flowed right through it. This lovely valley was unpopulated because the giants preferred to live only on the high mountains, where they could enjoy the brisk air. It was from the peak that Tworiez's wife pointed to the valley and said to her husband: "You should populate the valley. You have very skillful hands and know extremely well how to carve figures from the wood of the trees, and I'm sure that your clever head would find a way to instill life in them. Then, if all kinds of creatures would

bustle about the valley, we would have a splendid spectacle down there."

Tworiez liked this idea very much. His sad face brightened, and he asked his brother giants to bring him various trees from which he could carve the figures. The next day, the giants dragged oak, beech, and birch trees to him, and he went right to work. He carved large powerful figures from the oaks, sturdy and rugged, just like the old trees themselves, with limbs as hard as steel.

"They are to till the soil," he told his children who watched him in amazement while he worked. Meanwhile, he painted the figures with stern and serious colors and set them down in a row before his eyes.

"Now we must give them life," he explained and drilled a small hole into the head of each of the figures.

"What do you think would be the right potion?" he asked his wife, who had just come to see what he was doing.

"They must love the earth," his wife replied. "So you must put some soil in their heads. They must be diligent workers. So you must mix in a mashed ant."

The giant nodded and said: "They must also be good to one another. So, please breathe some of your air into each one of the figures because your kindness is so great that every word and every breath from you form kindness."

His wife did as he requested, and the giant closed the hole in each of the heads with a wooden cork. Then he ordered his children to lay the figures in a dark cavern because they would awake as soon as the sun cast its rays of light on them. The giant did not want this to happen before he finished carving the other figures.

Now he carved slender female figures, delicate and fine, from the

tender trunks of the birch trees and endowed them with silky white skin. He painted them with beautiful light colors and again asked his wife for advice.

"These fine beautiful things," his wife replied with a silent smile, "will become women and mothers. Therefore, they need a good deal of patience. Add a drop of sheep's blood into the potion. They will have to cheer up the men after hard work. So you should also mix in some drops of fresh water from the spring on the slope that sings and laughs."

The giant obeyed. However, just as he was about to close the holes in the heads of these figures, news arrived that a friend, another giant, had arrived from far away to visit him, and Tworiez hurried off to greet him. Meanwhile, the figures lay there with open heads.

At the same time, the giant's children came running to look at their father's work, and his little daughter, who was an arrogant and nosy thing, called to her brother: "Let's also shape these figures. Let's add something to the potion. I have beautiful parrot feathers in my closet, and I think we should shove them into the holes."

Consequently, they did this but did not have the slightest clue how much damage they had caused, for the figures whose heads had been stuffed with the parrot feathers became terribly talkative, always wanted the last word, and babbled and repeated everything they heard so that they never had an idea of their own. These figures, too, were placed in the dark cavern, and Tworiez looked at the trunks of the birch trees with something on his mind and said to his wife, "I've now created good hardworking creatures, but I fear that I put too much soil in their heads, They'll never be able to lift themselves above the ground. They'll never know anything but soil,

work, and bread. They'll never know how to take pleasure in beauty. I must provide a remedy for this. Well, I've been thinking about making new creatures who would embody restlessness, yearning, and beauty in the world. The creatures would then impart these feelings through words, colors, and tones to the other creatures."

Then he continued making a potion for some new figures, and instead of the soil, he took some blue of the sky, the silver gleam of the stars, the rustle of the wind, the glistening of the sea, and the craving of the flowers for light. Then, all these creatures were placed in the cavern.

In the meantime, winter had arrived. The nights became even longer. Dark clouds often hung over the lamps of the stars, and the giant could not see his work very clearly. In spite of this, he continued his carving eagerly and was able to finish making a whole new group of creatures. On one bright winter's day, however, when he regarded his new creatures, he uttered a terrible cry, for he had carved misfits that were long stiff figures with tiny heads and dumb faces. He was completely annoyed and cried out: "Nothing can be done to change these creatures! Throw them away! Burn them! I never want to see them again."

However, the children asked: "Please let us use them as playthings."

And the giant granted their wish. Then he carried all the other figures from the cavern and laid them down in the free air. As soon as the rays of the sun struck them, they were infused with life. They moved their arms and legs, opened their eyes, inhaled the air, stood up, and looked at the world in amazement.

Tworiez gave a beautiful speech and taught them how to build houses, till the land, and make clothes from certain materials to

protect themselves from cold weather. Then he sent them down into the valley.

From then on, the giants greatly enjoyed watching the activity of the creatures in the valley. The figures adapted themselves quickly in their new lives. When spring came, they began to till the soil, build wooden houses, and drive wild cows from the forests and tame them. They were all exceedingly hardworking and good-natured creatures, and Tworiez took great pleasure in watching them.

However, one day a giant came to visit him and requested that he come with him to his homeland. He wanted to show him strange animals that did not exist in Tworiez's country. Tworiez agreed to go with him and asked his wife to watch over the creatures in the valley when she could and to help them if it was necessary. Then he began the journey with his friend to a distant land.

Tworiez's children were disappointed that they had to remain home. Tworiez was a good father who spent a good deal of time with his children, and now they missed him very much and were bored.

On one rainy day, they sat sadly in the cavern and discussed what games they might play.

"Do you know what?" the little girl cried. "I have a great idea. Let's put some life into the wooden figures that father gave us. I watched how he did it, and I can do it, too."

The giant's son shook his head and responded, "Father said that the creatures are useless."

"All the same, let's try."

They dragged the figures from the cavern, laid them down in a row, and began to bore holes in their heads.

"What do you want to put in their heads?" the giant's son asked.

"Recently, mother brewed some medicine, and I saved some of it," the girl answered. "I've also mixed together drops of blood from tigers, hyenas, monkeys, peacocks, and donkeys. We can't pour much more than this into their small heads anyway."

Therefore, they filled about half of the heads of the wooden things with this dangerous potion, and then they became tired of this game, and the girl said, "Let's just leave the rest of the heads empty."

The next day, when the adult giants took their noonday nap, the two children dragged the wooden figures into the sun and watched as they gradually came to life.

"I believe," said the boy, who was older and smarter than his sister, "something is not right. Look at how stiffly they move! Even more, they look so dumb!"

His sister laughed like mad and cried out time after time: "How funny they are!"

Then she went over to the figures, made a solemn face, and commanded them to go down into the valley.

When the awkward figures arrived in the valley, there was great amazement, and the amazement became even greater when the inhabitants of the valley saw that the new guests did not know how to work and could only eat, drink, and sleep. At first, the inhabitants of the valley laughed about them. Soon, however, the guests became tiresome because half of them—namely, those whose heads contained the potion—were nasty and intolerable. The inhabitants of the valley called them "troublemakers" and directed them to go to a large house outside their village, where they were to remain and behave peacefully.

However, this did not please the troublemakers. They appeared almost daily at the place where they had been before. They strutted

about, were unruly, and acted like peacocks, eyeing the girls and bragging terribly. At a certain point, one of the smartest inhabitants of the valley went up to them and said: "Each one of you eats for two people. Moreover, you always demand the most beautiful and most colorful clothes, while none of you want to work. This is not right. You shouldn't just loaf about all day."

The leaders of the troublemakers looked at the man arrogantly and gave him a fresh answer: "Work is for the common people. However, we are highly refined and are not allowed to get our fingers dirty."

"Can't you do anything at all?" the smart man asked and looked at the stiff figure and dumb, courteous face in horror.

Then an evil spark glimmered in the empty eyes of the troublemaker, and his voice sounded like the scream of a wild animal: "We can kill!"

The intelligent man shook his head and said, "That's not useful work. Go home and think about this. Try to improve yourself."

The following day, the smart man held a talk in the council chamber of the inhabitants of the valley and demanded that the troublemakers be banned from the valley.

"They don't work but want to be fed and clothed. Moreover, they are dumb and malicious and represent a danger to our people."

The men agreed with him and voted for the banishment of the troublemakers. However, the women held a different view. They liked the troublemakers. Since they did not work, they always found time to chat and joke with the girls. Moreover, the women liked the colorful clothes of the troublemakers.

Unfortunately, Tworiez had carved more women than men because he had received more birch trees than other trees. Conse-

quently, the women in the council outnumbered the men, so the troublemakers were not banished.

Now, everything remained as it was. Those troublemakers whose heads remained empty were dumb, harmless creatures. They had only one fault: they believed completely and blindly obeyed the words of the troublemakers in whose heads the dangerous potion had stuck, and these other troublemakers were filled with evil. They were angry that the hardworking inhabitants of the valley scorned them, and they deliberated day and night what plan they could set in motion so that they could rule all the people of the valley.

Now, the valley was split in two by a large vigorous river, and the troublemakers lived on the right side of the river and searched for the dumbest of the valley inhabitants. Then they told these creatures with words of praise how much smarter, nobler, and beautiful they were than the people on the other side of the river. At first, the dumb people laughed at the troublemakers, but since they heard these words every day, they gradually began to believe them.

One day the leader of the troublemakers brought them a colorful cloth and explained to them that it was their flag, and only those who honored and loved this flag belonged to them. All other people were their enemies. Everyone else who lived on the right side of the river believed this as well. So when the malicious troublemakers also whispered to them that the ground on the other side of the river was much more fertile and productive than theirs and that the people there were so rich that they did not have to work, the people on the right side of the river began to hate their neighbors on the other side.

The troublemakers were now very content, for they were respected and loved by the inhabitants of the right side of the river, especially because they promised to help the poor fools to drive out their enemies on the left side of the river. The inhabitants gave the troublemakers the best food, the finest wines, and the most splendid clothes. Moreover, the most beautiful young women regarded it as a great honor to become their wives.

Now, the troublemakers went to the left side of the river, hammered their lies into the heads of the people, and also gave them a colorful flag that was, of course, colored differently from the flag that they had given the people on the right side of the river.

After they had played their malicious game for some time, the hate of the inhabitants of the valley on both sides of the river grew so great that they longed to kill each other and rob each other's land.

When Tworiez returned from his journey to his friend's country, he saw with horror what had become of the peaceful creatures that he had created. They harmed each other wherever they could. They beat each other to death. They imprisoned the intelligent people among them who dared to speak out against the troublemakers. And the dumb, malicious troublemakers were now the lords of the land.

The giant did not understand how this had come to pass. He had the misfits that he had created brought to an empty cavern, and now they swaggered about down under in the valley. They boasted and did mean and stupid things one after the other.

"I had intended to do good with my creatures," Tworiez lamented sadly. "Now they hurt one another and have been transformed into evil things. Who was it that brought these misfits to life and let them loose on the reasonable creatures?"

Soon the giant's children came weeping and confessed their guilt to him. Tworiez became enraged and said to them: "You caused this disaster. Now see to it that you make things better. You will live alone in a cave and are not allowed to speak with anyone so long as you do not change things."

The giant's poor children obeyed. They crawled sadly into a remote cave and thought day and night how they might be able to put an end to the disaster. Meanwhile, things became even worse in the valley. Led by the troublemakers, who carried the colored flags, the inhabitants of both sides of the river fought against one another, murdered one another, took over parts of the land, burned houses, and dragged the defeated people away to prisons.

The giant's daughter wept bitter tears when she saw the numerous dead and wounded people, the destroyed villages and hungry children. Then, despite the ban, she rushed to her father.

"I am ready to make amends," she sobbed. "Tell me what I must do to put an end to the horror down in the valley. I'd gladly die if that would undo all the wrong that I have committed."

Tworiez gave her a severe look and said: "There is only one possibility, and I don't know whether you will have the strength and patience to do this. You must prepare a new potion made of wisdom and kindness, and you must infuse the creatures with this potion while they sleep. This will be a lengthy work because there are now so many creatures."

"Must I also infuse the troublemakers with the potion?" the giant's daughter asked.

"No, it would be in vain. Nothing can help these creatures."

"I'll do this, father," the giant's daughter promised. "I'll climb down and go into the valley every night to infuse these poor creatures with the potion."

Then Tworiez looked kindly at his daughter and gave her a kiss.

"Go, my dear child. Your mother and I shall prepare the potion, and your brother will help you with the infusion."

Now, the giant's two children climbed down into the valley every evening and infused one creature after another with the healthy potion. It was a lengthy, arduous process. When the children saw the effect, they were at first horrified. Those creatures who had already received the cure recognized the truth right away and saw that they had killed their good neighbors and had let themselves be ruled by malicious, dumb wooden puppets in colorful clothes. And they announced this truth loudly and fearlessly. However, there were not many of these converted creatures, and the majority that had not yet been cured became angry and beat the cured ones to death or threw them into prison. They still believed the words of the troublemakers. The giant's daughter went to Tworiez with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"The cure doesn't help. Now all the smart and kind people are being murdered, and I can't work any faster," she lamented.

Tworiez smiled.

"Search for some allies who can help you with your work," he said. "Reveal the secret of the cure to your helpers and ask them to work throughout the night to infuse the creatures with the potion."

The giant's daughter followed her father's advice, and now the work went faster. Of course, it took some time to infuse the creatures, but finally the morning arrived when the giant's daughter could gleam with joy and report to Tworiez that all the creatures—men, women, even all the children—had been infused with the cure.

"What is going to happen now?" she asked.

"You will soon see," Tworiez replied.

Since the sun had risen, all the giants sat on the peak of the mountain and looked in suspense down into the valley. The troublemakers wanted to fight an enormous battle and marched out carrying the colorful flags before the people. When the sun shone on the two armies, however, a laughter rang out so shrill that all the surrounding mountains trembled, and many thousand voices called out: "Look! Look at the wooden puppets marching against each other with their colorful flags! Haven't we really let ourselves be misled by these wooden puppets?!"

Suddenly, the "enemies" ran toward each other, embraced one another, and realized that they were brothers who had to help each other. There was great jubilation in the valley. The troublemakers stood there really dumb and confused. Then, however, they bellowed to the crowd: "Get back and fall in line! Forward! March!"

It would have been better had they kept silent. Given their happiness, the creatures were ready to forgive them. Now, however, since they heard the dumb, arrogant, snarling voices, they began to recall the misery and disaster that the troublemakers had caused, and their hearts became furious.

"What should we do with these dumbbells?" a man from the right side of the river asked.

"They must leave," a woman cried out. "Their stupidity and malice killed our sons!"

"But what if they come back?"

Now they consulted with one another.

Tworiez, who was watching all this, stuck his hand out and grabbed a large dark cloud and covered the troublemakers with it so that even the slightest ray of the sun could not penetrate it. It took only a moment, and then the lives of the troublemakers were

extinguished, and they fell down and laid stiff and rigid on the ground.

"Look!" the creatures jumped for joy. "They weren't ever really alive! They are just dead wooden puppets! Let's make a fire of joy this evening and burn the wooden puppets!"

And this is exactly what happened. An enormous fire of joy was built and ignited, and the flames illuminated the entire region. Down below in the valley, the creatures danced and rejoiced, and on top of the mountain, the giants celebrated and invited the giant's children into their society again.

Some mighty smoke rose into the air, and the women giants drew their kerchiefs around their noses, for the stench of the smoke was terrible.

"Why does the smoke stink so badly?" a baby giant asked.

"That's the potion that was in the heads of the troublemakers," Tworiez replied.

He looked down in the valley at his creatures with a cheerful heart. To be sure, their lives were still threatened by many worries. However, the greatest danger was already overcome, and it was now in their power to confront other dangers without the help of the giants. A short time after that joyful night, the giants migrated and moved to another country.

8 ■ The Castle of Truth (1924)

There was once was a large and mighty park in a beautiful valley that spread itself out to the foot of a blissful high mountain. The wealthiest man of the city, greatly respected by all the citizens because of his vast wealth, bought the park and had a splendid palace built there. The palace's high and wide windows provided a view of the mountain and a dilapidated gray castle on top.

After the workers finished building the rich man's palace, there was a great celebration and feast. The wealthiest men of the city came with their wives and daughters, and there were also ministers, officers, and other distinguished people who were invited. They enjoyed the delicious food and drank the choice wines.

After the meal, the people paraded in the garden. The moon was bright and illuminated the rich man's marble palace, the dark rugged mountain, and the old somber castle on the summit that was sadly in ruins.

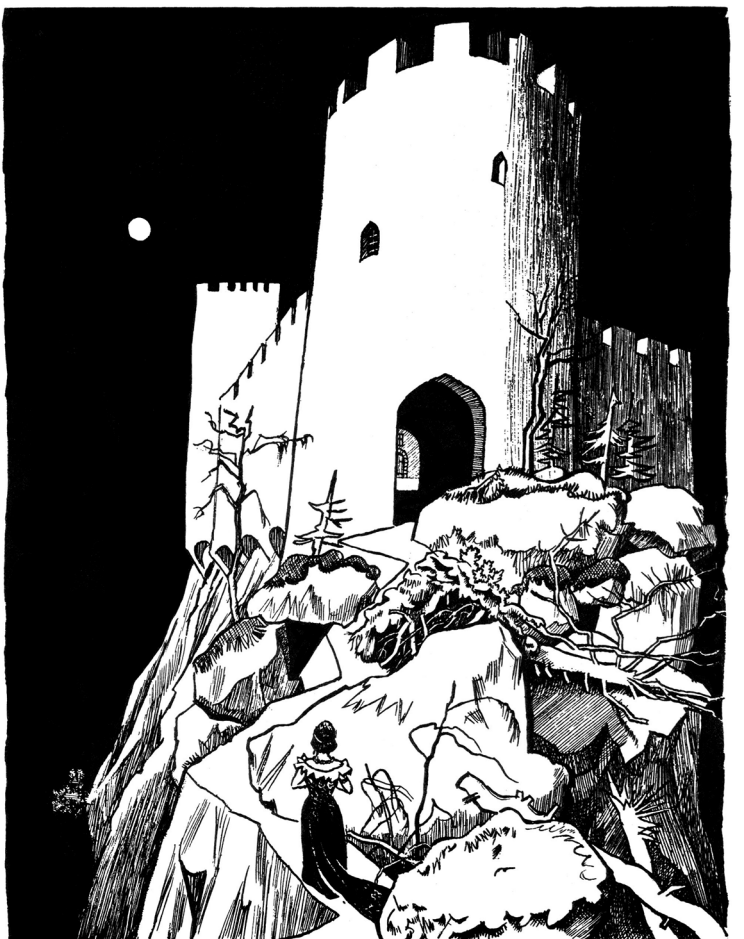
In front of the iron gate of the park, a ragged, emaciated old man stuck his hand through the bars and begged for alms. A black patch covered one of his eyes, and one of his legs was wooden. He had worked in the rich man's factories and had lost his eye and leg when a boiler had exploded.

When the rich man caught sight of the beggar, he became furious because the shabby, miserable fellow was not suitable and disturbed the eminent and beautifully dressed people. He screamed

at the old man, and one of the officers struck the scrawny hand that was stretched through the iron gate, causing the beggar to turn away sadly. However, he spoke to the rich man in a strange tone: "You really have chosen a good place to have your glorious palace built. But don't you know that the castle of truth is on top of that mountain over there? It is indestructible and eternal and will continue to stand after the glory and power of the rich come to an end."

Then the beggar pointed to the rugged mountain with his lean and shriveled hand and departed. Just as he left, something very strange happened—the moon disappeared suddenly behind the clouds. The lights in the white marble palace went out, and darkness enshrouded the park and the horrified people. Meanwhile, a pale light appeared on the summit of the mountain and became stronger and stronger. Bright rays exploded from the castle, and now it was no longer a dilapidated old building but a mighty castle with battlements and towers. It appeared to be exceedingly strong, as if it had been built for eternity.

Among the guests, there was a young woman who did not fit in with the eminent society. She was a poor orphan, and one of the rich men had wed her because of her great beauty. He decked her out with pearls and diamonds so that people could see how rich he was. But when they were alone, he yelled at her, called her a beggar, and sneered at her previous poverty. Amina—this was the name of the young woman—had distanced herself a bit from the people gathered around the gate because she wanted to run after the beggar and give him something. As night now fell over the palace and the castle of truth began to shine, she, too, stood still. She looked first at the mountain and then at the other people. All at once, she caught sight of something so strange that she became breathless and was not able to move her arms or legs.



The bright rays appeared like little streams that flowed through the air and flooded the faces of the people. Moreover, each face illuminated by a ray was quickly transformed. Suddenly, the rich man had the face of a wild rapacious wolf. When he bared his teeth, blood flowed from his jaws. The prime minister's head was turned into the head and face of a sheep and slumped over his chest, which was decorated with medals. He quickly opened his dumb eyes as widely as he could. Then he looked anxiously and obsequiously at the rich man's wolf-like face as though this wealthy man was his master. Soon, the officers turned into nasty, stinking hyenas, and almost all the refined ladies looked like horrified geese. Amina saw fox faces, wild tiger grimaces, and leeches among the eminent people. Then she covered her face with trembling hands.

Now, a ray from the castle of truth struck her as well, and a great longing awakened in her heart. She felt the wish to climb the rugged mountain, to learn what all these strange things meant, and to see the truth. As the rich man's guests ran hurriedly from the darkened park into the palace, she remained alone and continued to stare at the glittering castle high above her. It seemed to wave to her and to call to her with countless voices. She had to obey the call.

Her fine silk shoes were torn as she walked up the stony path. Thorns and branches grabbed her silk gown, but she wandered onward, climbing higher and higher, and became tired, panting, and full of fear. Finally, she reached the top of the mountain and stood in front of the castle of truth. The gate opened by itself, and Amina entered a long, dark corridor. Her heart beat rapidly as she moved on until another gate opened before her. Now, she stood in a large, dimly lit room. She remained silent and felt even more anxious

than before. She would have preferred to run away, back to the white marble palace, but just as she turned to go, she remembered that those wild animals were living in the marble palace, and their faces had given her a terrible fright. All at once, her pounding heart forced her to ask loudly: "What is the truth?"

Suddenly, the wall across from her lit up, and Amina saw that it consisted of a single large mirror. She went toward it, and she saw her own beautiful face in the mirror. Now, she was somewhat relieved and dared to look more attentively into the mirror. But what was that? The diamonds that crowned her blonde hair changed themselves right before her eyes into drops of blood that slowly trickled down her face. The pearls wrapped around her slender neck became large tears. The splendid fine lace that hung gracefully on her silk gown became eyes, tired sore eyes that looked up at her with a sad reproach. Then soft accusing voices sounded from the gems and lace, and their painful sound squeezed and crushed Amina's heart.

"What is that?" Amina moaned. "What have I done that has caused blood and tears to cling to me and so many eyes to cast reproaching looks at me?"

Then the mirror darkened for a moment before brightening once more. All at once, Amina saw people who were slaving away under a blazing sun. Many collapsed and stayed there lying and dying on a red-hot rock. Sometimes, a man came running and held a sparkling small stone high in the air—a diamond that glistened red like the blood that flowed from the hands of the workers. Amina felt that the diamond crown pressed her head to the ground as if ice-cold hands clasped her head in a vice. She ripped off the crown and threw it onto the ground.

Just then, the mirror became dark and bright again.

Amina saw a deep blue sea before her. Naked people stood on the shore. There were ten. There were also some women on the beach. Some wept. The men swam out into the sea, dove under the water, and disappeared. The women ran anxiously along the shore back and forth. After a certain amount of time passed, nine exhausted, coughing men emerged and swam back to the shore. They held mussels in their hands. The tenth man did not reappear. His wife and his little son ran back and forth moaning on the shore. They continually gazed out at the sea, but it was all in vain. The nine other men delivered the mussels to a fat man, and when he opened the shells, milky white pearls gleamed at him.

Amina grasped the nape of her neck while burning tears flowed toward her white breast. They were the tears of the woman and her son that they had wept for the drowned pearl fisherman. Amina pulled the pearl necklace and ripped the chain so that the large glistening white tears rolled all over the ground.

Then the mirror became dark for a moment and turned bright again.

Amina saw a young woman who sat at a window in a small room. She was bent over deeply at some work. The lean fingers of the young woman wrapped very thin threads into one another. She worked on some lace. Sometimes, she lifted her head and rubbed her red eyes filled with tears. An old woman entered the room and groped her way along the wall, for she was blind.

"How is the work going, my daughter?" the old woman asked.

"My eyes are filled with tears, and they hurt," replied the young woman.

"That comes from the fine thread, my child. But it is our good luck that those elegant women need lace clothes. Otherwise, we'd have to starve."

"Mother!" The young woman's voice screeched almost out of fear. "Mother, how old were you when you turned blind?"

"I was thirty-five, my dear. Many lace workers have luck and turn blind first when they turn forty or forty-five. But I became blind at thirty-five."

Then the young woman groaned. "Ten years still! Ten years still! Then I won't see the sun anymore. I won't be able to see my child's face!"

Blind eyes looked up at Amina from the lace gown that she was wearing, sightless eyes, which caused Amina to scream loudly and tear her lace gown into pieces as she wept.

Then the mirror darkened.

But Amina sobbed: "Am I then alone the guilty one? Am I the one who didn't know all this? And the others, the wild animals?"

Amina caught sight of wild animals in the mirror and saw how they devoured their prey, how they mangled human bodies, how they ate up little children and became fatter. And she also saw how the sheep obeyed the wild animals and worked for them. Suddenly, some bright figures charged on the scene and began fighting with the wild animals and killed them.

Then the mirror darkened again, and at the same moment, the castle gate opened. Amina ran out of the castle, down the mountain, and dashed into the white marble palace where the eminent people were still celebrating. Weeping and moaning, she told them what she had seen. The guests were angry that their beautiful party was disturbed in this way.

"All this comes about when a gentleman marries a poor maiden," one of the elegant ladies remarked, "and then takes her into our good society." And she glared at Amina's husband in an arrogant way.

"My poor wife has become crazy," the husband stammered in horror. "This could happen to anyone, madam."

"Not to us," answered the countess in a severe tone.

Then Anima screamed, "Of course not, because you are all crazy anyway! Crazy criminals, thieves, murderers, wild animals!"

But they did not let her continue talking. There was a doctor among the fine people, and he declared that Amina was mad, and consequently she was imprisoned in an insane asylum.

This incident spoiled the rich man's celebration of his glorious park and his new palace. Every night thereafter, when darkness enveloped the earth, the castle of truth glowed and sparkled on the summit of the mountain, and the rays of light appeared to penetrate farther into the country every day.

Soon, the rich man decided to have the castle on the mountain torn down. Certainly, he had to purchase the mountain in order to do this, and it cost him a bundle of money. However, the rich man was very resourceful. He paid each worker in his factory a lower salary, and this way he not only reduced the cost of tearing down the castle, but he was also able to keep a nice sum of money that was left over. Then, since he was a charitable man, he gave one percent of this money to the Society for Needy Daughters of Pastors. Later on, this good deed was printed in the newspaper in large letters.

A large group of workers climbed the mountain to tear down the old castle. It was a hot summer day, and the sun burned the heads of the men. They worked silently with pickaxes and hatchets. Then the short break for lunch at noon arrived. A young worker threw himself down on the moss and lay his head on a rock from the old castle. No sooner did his head touch the rock than he began having strange thoughts that troubled him so much he had to tell

them to his comrades. He pointed with his hand to the shady green park down below, where the white marble palace was shining, and said: "Is it really right that the people down there loaf about while we must slave away in the blazing heat of the sun? Are they actually better than we are?"

An older worker became horrified and ran over to him.

"Be still, Peter. We should just be happy to have any jobs at all. Otherwise, we'd have to starve along with our children. Rich people who loaf about have always existed, and poor people have always . . ."

He put his hand on the rock where the young worker had lain his head, and suddenly his face changed and his tired anxious voice became firm and hard, and he continued speaking: ". . . and poor people have always existed who were dumb enough to let themselves be exploited. However, this will now be different because it's beginning to dawn in the heads of workers, and they realize that only those who work have a right to life and all the good things that life affords. You and me, Peter, we want to announce this lesson to all those exploited people."

When the workers returned home to their miserable shacks, they carried tiny little stones on their heavy boots that had fallen off the castle of truth. In the morning when the women swept the floors, their hard hands touched the tiny stones and strange ideas began to buzz in their heads.

"Why do my children lie on a sack of straw while the small son of the banker sleeps in a heavenly bed that has room for three young ones? Why does the daughter of the landowner have such rosy cheeks and such a well-rounded small body while my small daughter's face is pale like snow? Her back is crooked, and her lean little legs can hardly carry her. It must not continue like this. Our

children are not worse than the children of the rich, and they, too, must have everything they need."

And since women love to chatter, the wives of the construction workers told their neighbors what they thought, and they talked about this from morning to night. The glistening rays of light came from the castle of truth and became embodied in the tiniest stone. Now, it penetrated the heads of the people and from there illuminated the dark world.

After a week had passed, the building contractor reported to the rich man that not a single stone from the old castle remained. Consequently, he smirked and stuck a good amount of money that the rich man gave him into his pocket. Then he gave the workers, who had slaved away under the blazing sun on the mountain, just one percent of the money.

The rich man was entirely happy as he viewed the mountain peak without the threatening castle that no longer was a danger to him. Then he called all his friends to come and celebrate the total destruction of the castle of truth.

When the rich man and his guests took a walk after the feast and went into the park, however, a bright little light beamed from the mountain peak down to them, and the castle of truth could be seen standing before the horrified eyes of the eminent people—larger, stronger, and more powerful than ever. Its defiant battlements and towers jutted into the sky, and a voice thundered from the mountain down into the valley: "Look at the castle of truth! It is indestructible and eternal and will still be standing when the glory and power of the rich come to an end."

9 ■ The Broom (1924)

From time to time, an old sorcerer, who lived in a large forest, used to go into the village to observe the villagers and their activities and to help good people and to punish those who were evil. One day deep in wintertime, he set out once again for the village. Now, in the night it had snowed a great deal, and the streets were covered with thin ice, causing the old sorcerer to slip to the ground and sprain his ankle. In addition, his cane sprang from his hand and slid so far away on the thin ice that the sorcerer wasn't able to grab it. Consequently, the poor old man just lay there and sighed. He could not move himself.

Since it was already evening, dark shadows enshrouded the houses, and the street was deserted. The sorcerer was freezing on the cold ground, and he looked anxiously around on all sides to see whether there was some person who might be able to help him. Finally, he heard the snow crunching in the distance, and soon thereafter, three young boys came walking down the street.

Up front marched Melchior, who was the son of the richest farmer in the region. He was dressed in a satin vest and a warm fur jacket and carried a solid silver cane. After him came Franz, the teacher's son, who was thin and freezing, and the last boy was Karl, who walked with heavy and tired steps. He was a temporary worker and did not have a mother or a father.

When Melchior caught sight of the sorcerer lying on the ground,

he began to laugh aloud and cried out mockingly: "Magic can't help you against slippery ice! Keep lying there, you old fool! When my father had a court trial with his servant, you spoke out against him. Now I'm paying you back!"

And Melchior kept laughing until his belly shook.

In contrast, Franz sighed deeply and muttered with a pitiful voice: "Oh, the poor old man! The cold weather must be torturing him! The villagers should have strewn ashes on the street. Then something like this wouldn't have happened. And the unlucky man has also lost his cane."

Franz leaned down and picked up the cane and placed it in the sorcerer's hand. Then he moved a bit to the side and looked at the old man. Franz was touched and sad and uttered a deep sigh. Meanwhile, Karl didn't say a word. He lifted the sorcerer to his feet and then said: "I'll take you home, old man. You won't be able to make it without some support."

So he led the limping sorcerer to his hut. The next day, the sorcerer's daughter appeared in the village and searched for the three boys. She brought something for each one of them, and when she found Melchior, she handed him a gold coin.

"My father has sent this to thank you for your nasty words."

The rich farmer's son laughed and was very happy to have received the gold coin. Yet, he thought: "When the old fool sends me, the one who mocked him, a gold coin, then how many gold coins might he have sent to Franz, who gave him his cane, or Karl who helped him home!"

As a result of all his thinking, he was no longer so pleased with the single gold coin. Each time he looked at it, he couldn't stop thinking: "I have only one gold coin. If only I had ten, twenty, a hundred, a thousand."

Meanwhile, the sorcerer's daughter presented Franz with a quill pen and said, "My father sends you this pen as thanks for your sympathy."

The teacher's son looked at the feather pen with astonishment, for he was a modest boy, who had not expected a reward. So he thanked her politely and stuck the pen in a holder.

Last, the sorcerer's daughter presented Karl with a large broom. "My father sends you this broom as thanks for your help."

Karl growled: "I don't want any thanks. If a person needs help, then I help him."

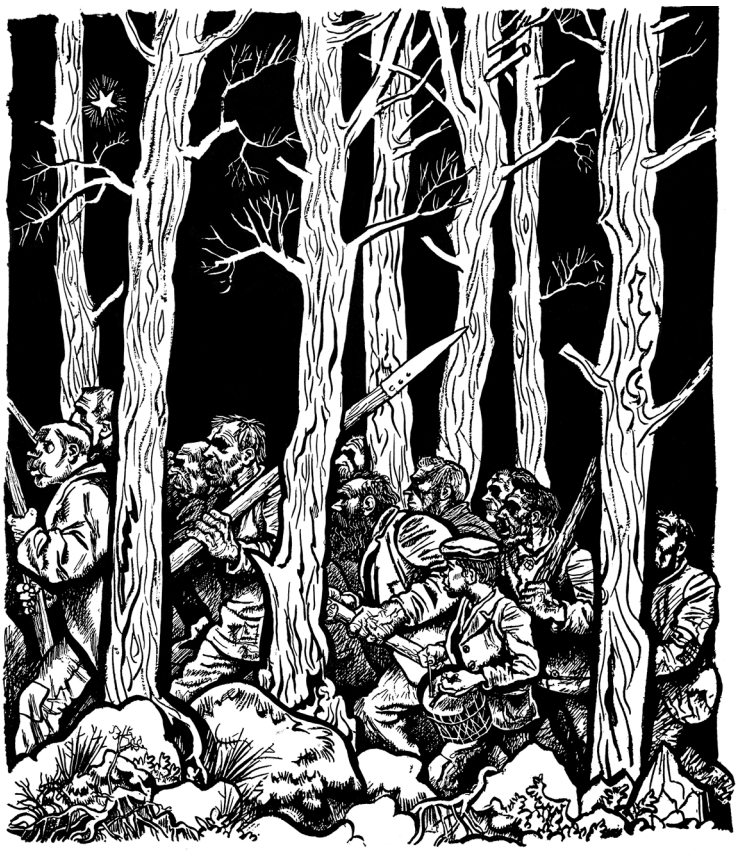
He wanted to give back the broom, but the sorcerer's daughter had already disappeared. Consequently, he put the broom in a corner of his room and didn't think any more about it.

Now, the sorcerer was a genuine, powerful sorcerer, and his gifts also possessed magical power. As a result, it was this power that the three boys were about to experience.

As often as Melchior looked at the gold coin, something screamed loudly in his heart: "More gold, I want more gold. Everything else doesn't matter, only gold, gold!" And when the old farmer died, and Melchior inherited the farm, he continued only to think about gold and how to gain piles of gold. Consequently, he gave the farm workers starvation wages and forced them to work like slaves. He cheated wives and orphans. He bought the grain harvest for himself, and his farm grew larger and larger. More cows and horses filled his stables, but he did not enjoy this and could not rest. He wanted gold, more and more gold. Finally, he heard about a country far away in the north where gold had been found in the earth. Now, he dreamed day and night about this wonderland. He saw the gold spew out from the ground right before him, gold, so much gold that crates and chests were not able to hold all this gold. He sold

his farm, moved north, and became a gold digger. However, he did not have any luck. His companion, with whom he shared a hut, found gold in the ground, while Melchior found only stones. The longing for gold kept growing in him and made him crazy. He forgot everything. He forgot how his companion had faithfully taken care of him when he had been sick and how brotherly he had been in bad times. Yet, one night, Melchior tried to steal this companion's gold. However, his companion awoke. The two of them struggled with another, and when Melchior took out a knife to stab his companion, this man hit him in the head with a clump of gold, and Melchior fell dead to the ground.

It was different with Franz. He went to the city to study, and he took the sorcerer's quill pen with him because he had yet to use it. Franz had to live economically because he was poor. One day, he picked up the feather pen and wanted to write down his assignments. But instead of numbers, words came. The feather wrote and wrote. It wrote two pages full, and when it was done and Franz read what it had written, he saw a beautiful poem about the suffering of poor people and the wickedness of rich people. It was a poem that one could read aloud only in a tearful, sobbing voice. A newspaper printed the poem, and consequently, Franz became a poet. For many, many years, he lamented in beautiful words about the suffering of poor people and challenged the rich to improve themselves. However, the suffering of the poor remained the same, and the rich people did not improve themselves. All this continued until one day when the poor people themselves began to create order; it then meant no more writing beautiful words and lamenting. Rather it meant action. Now poor Franz, who had only written poems with sighs his entire life, didn't know what to do. He grabbed for his magic feather pen to encourage himself, and he



wrote down the world "action." Then the feather broke, and Franz began to weep. Immediately thereafter, he fled to the peak of a mountain, where he ended his life as a hermit.

Now, we have only Karl to recall along with his strange gift, the broom that was sent to him by the sorcerer. It was a marvelous broom. Whenever something unjust happened nearby, it began to drone: "Sweep away! Sweep away!"

Karl heard these words quite often and began to think about them. He looked around the world and saw how many things needed to be swept away, especially those people who led a life of idleness and lived off the work of others and were nothing but filth and garbage. Sometimes, he took the broom in his hand, held it firmly, and vowed that he would never stop or rest in helping to sweep away the dirt. In the meantime, he, too, had left the village and wandered about as a worker in various countries, where his broom found circumstances in which it had to utter its words. And Karl realized more and more clearly how things in the world were unjust, how working people were being exploited everywhere, and how splendidly idle people lived. He also realized that beautiful words and wailing were useless and that people had to sweep away injustice with a stronger hand. No matter where Karl went, he took the smart and faithful broom with him. He soon became accustomed to repeating the broom's words to his comrades, and his friends understood that the broom was right. They had to act according to these words.

So they spread the broom's words further among their comrades, and in turn, they spread the words even further so that they soon rang through the entire world.

Later, when the injustice in the world became much too great, all those who knew the clever words of the broom and took them

to their hearts rose up. In one country, they succeeded in sweeping away all the injustice and all the garbage and created a new, pure world. And, indeed, Karl was there with his broom.

In other countries, however, the poor people began making and binding their brooms so that all the garbage could be swept away. It is about time to begin the sweeping, because the garbage is piled high like a mountain and threatens to bury the people.

10 ■ The Carriage Horse (1924)

The hot summer day had ended. In the stable, where the workhorses on this large estate stood, it became darker. The tired horses coughed faintly in the oppressive heat. An old gray horse groaned loudly and licked his stiff legs repeatedly with his tongue.

"Once again that was quite a day!" he moaned. "We just slave away pulling the heavy hay wagons from early in the morning until late in the evening. It's unbearable!"

"And we get nothing but lousy fodder in the bargain!" a gaunt mare grumbled.

Now, all the horses started complaining and muttering. Only a very lean workhorse, who stood in a corner, listened without saying a word. As the others finally stopped talking, he neighed scornfully.

"Why are you laughing? You're just an outsider!" the mare cried out angrily, and an old gray horse said, "What does a city horse, a carriage horse, know about our hard life?"

"I'm mocking you," responded the horse who used to be a carriage horse, "because you yourselves are to blame for your own misfortune."

"You're definitely nuts!" the old gray horse bellowed.

However, a young mare found the exotic character of the horse who had recently arrived in the stable very interesting. She looked

at him with her beautiful large eyes and asked: "Well, what should we do?"

"Why do you work for people, who demand so much from you and yet give you such bad food to eat?" the carriage horse asked.

"Because these people have the whip," a young chestnut horse responded.

"Who is stronger, you or the man with the whip?" the carriage horse asked quickly.

The young chestnut looked at his strong legs with a vain smile and cried out, "I'm stronger, much stronger!"

"Nevertheless, you obey someone weaker than you!" the carriage horse jeered at him.

The other horses felt offended.

"Don't talk such nonsense!" the old gray horse grumbled.

In addition, others cried out: "Naturally, he comes from the city. That's why he's so smart."

However, an old mare who was used only for transporting water because her legs were no longer strong, sighed: "Men are our masters. We must obey them."

However, the young mare carefully observed the intelligent face of the carriage horse and remarked: "Let him talk. You've been moaning and groaning for as long as I can remember, and nothing has helped. Perhaps he can give us some advice."

Then the horses became quiet, and they all looked toward the corner of the stable where the carriage horse was standing. Then he spoke: "I can give you some advice because I saw in the city what people do when they are faced with poverty and misery. Right now, at the time of the hay harvest, the men need you very much to bring the hay to the barn so that it can dry. So refuse to work unless you receive better fodder. You'll see that the men will have to give in."

"That's a good idea!" the young mare cried, but the old horses shook their heads in disbelief.

"What harm will it do to rest for one day?" the carriage horse said. "Even if you don't gain anything, it won't be a disaster. But I tell you, you will gain something!"

And he kept talking to the other horses and explained to them how much the men needed them and how mean they were not to reward the horses for their hard work. The younger horses quickly took his side, while the older ones lacked courage. Yet, by the time the first dim morning light came penetrated the little windows in the stable, the carriage horse had convinced everyone to follow his plan.

"They will beat you," he warned them. "They will use force against you. But you must not surrender."

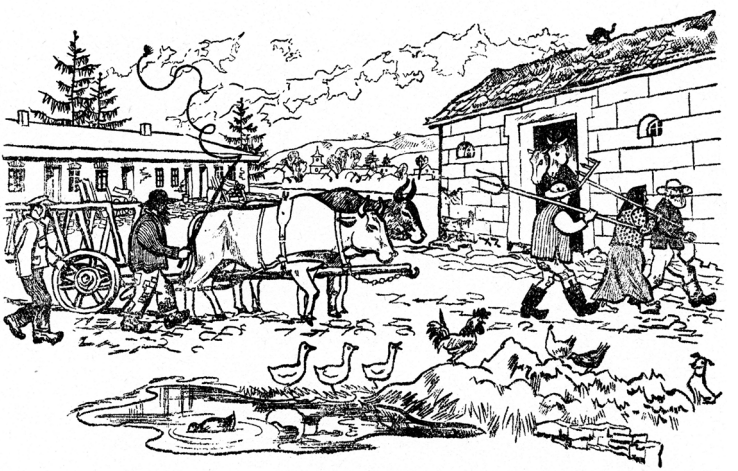
"Just let them try to beat me," the young mare laughed and spoke defiantly." Then they'll get a taste of my hoofs!"

"That's the right idea," the carriage horse praised her. "Power must be met with power. Words, even good ones, words don't help at all."

When dawn arrived and it became light, the men came to fetch the horses from the stable and to harness them. However, the horses stood there as if they were made out of stone. They didn't move a leg, and they pulled back their ears and looked angry. At first, the men tried to get them to move with coaxing words. Yet, when this turned out to be useless, they grabbed their whips. This, too, was in vain. The horses stood there as if they had been cast out of stone and let the blows of the whips roll off their backs.

"This is a sheer horse strike!" the furious stable master screamed.

"I always said that the horses don't receive enough to eat," an old



stable helper remarked, and the stable master swore at him for saying this

Finally, the men realized that they couldn't cope with the horses. The younger horses had already begun to defend themselves and to kick when anyone came near them. Consequently, the men withdrew, cursing and swearing. Then the horses laughed joyfully and praised the carriage horse who had given them such good advice. Yet, suddenly, the gray old mare saw something happening outside through the small window from her stall and cried out: "Oh no! The oxen! Now they're harnessing the oxen! It's all been in vain now!"

Since the carriage horse was not very familiar with conditions in the country, he had not thought of this. To be sure, the oxen worked much more slowly and poorly than the horses, but they worked nevertheless. So they would be able to bring the hay into the barn. Now, the horses began to complain all over again, and their grumbling became even louder when they noticed that they hadn't received any fodder as punishment for their actions. So they bitterly reproached the carriage horse, while the old horses even declared that they were ready to resume working because it was God's will that they were to work for low wages, and nothing could be done about that. Only the young mare became impatient and cried out: "It's not the will of God, it's the will of the oxen! If we now obey the men and accept our fate, then we'll be obeying the oxen."

However, the carriage horse did not seem to hear the complaints or the reproaches. He stood completely still in his place and thought about the situation. Finally, he asked: "Does anyone have anything to do with the oxen while you work?"

"Yes," the old mare replied. "I haul water to the oxen stable two times daily."

"That's good to know. So now, when the men want to hitch you in front of the water wagon, obey them and then explain to the oxen why we are doing what we are doing. Tell them that they are not to work tomorrow. If we win, they will gain something as well."

The old mare promised to do her very best and let herself be hitched to a wagon that evening. Then she managed to gain entrance to the oxen stable. However, she returned to the horse stable in despair.

"The oxen say," she reported, "that this affair doesn't concern them at all. Although they also complain about the poor food they receive, they claim that the god of oxen has ordered them to be obedient, humble, and modest and to submit to the men. If they refuse to do this, then they will not be allowed to enter oxen heaven after their deaths."

The carriage horse snorted furiously and cursed the oxen along with their oxen god and their oxen heaven.

"Things are just as bad for them as they are for us!" he exclaimed angrily. "But they are too cowardly and too lazy to defend themselves. They are so dumb that they don't realize they possess practical weapons. But we'll deal with them soon enough."

Then he spoke with the old mare for a long time and in great detail.

The next day the horses refused to be taken out of their stable again. They stood there just as before like stone, and when a man raised his whip, they raised their hoofs and kicked. And once again, the oxen ambled obediently to the fields even though they were exhausted from the unusual work they were compelled to do.

In the evening, the old mare hauled water to the oxen stable and began to chat with the oxen.

"Well now, you faithful servants," she asked, "have you received double and doubly delicious fodder for the double work you've done today?"

"Oh, no," the oxen sighed. "We received just as little and bad fodder as usual. Those men are ungrateful creatures!"

"And despite this you're going to work for them tomorrow?"

"Of course, what else should we do?"

"You see what we're doing," the old mare reminded them.

"You've let yourselves be misled by this city horse, this Jew. You've let yourself be misled by this carriage horse who doesn't believe in God and humility. He will ruin you!" the oxen cried.

Then the old mare repeated the words that the carriage horse had told her to say and explained to the oxen that they were much stronger than the men and that only the dumbness of the oxen prevented them from dealing with the humans. Finally, the mare called upon the oxen not to work the following day and in that way to support their brothers, the horses.

Some of the oxen gradually seemed to grasp what was at stake and promised not to work the following day. However, other oxen made angry remarks and yelled at their brethren.

"Leave our stable!" they bellowed. "We want order and fear of God in this stable! You don't belong here. You're not genuine oxen!"

Soon a fierce fight erupted. The old mare was compelled to leave again. However, before she departed, she cried out loudly so that the entire stable heard her: "If you don't help us voluntarily, like good comrades, then we'll force you to do so. The horses want you to know that each ox who goes to work tomorrow will be kicked

in the ribs by a horse's hoofs at the first encounter after this. Remember this!"

Then the mare trotted merrily out of the stable.

The oxen were very terrified. They were afraid of the horses' hoofs much more than they were of the whips of the men, and so it was not very difficult for those oxen who had already sided with the horses to convince the recalcitrant oxen also to take the side of the horses.

The next day, the oxen also stood like stone when the men came to fetch them with their whips, and some even lowered their heads and threatened the men with their horns. Meanwhile, dark clouds threatening rain appeared in the sky, and the hay continued to lie on the fields. The manager of the estate ran back and forth and was at his wit's end. Finally, he realized what was at stake and said to himself: "I've got to give in. They're just animals and not humans. It won't do much harm if I give them what they want."

So he had some rich and good fodder brought to the horses and oxen and went from animal to animal stroking their backs with kind words.

The horses ate until they were satisfied and then let themselves be hitched to the wagons. Then they brought the hay from the fields to the barn.

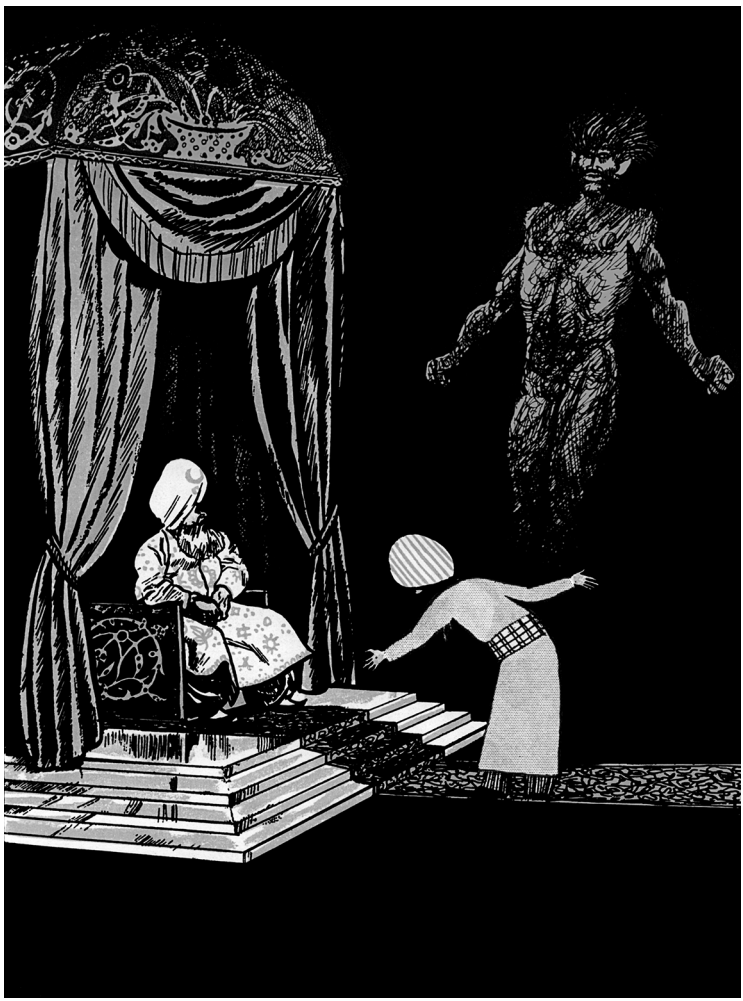
The carriage horse did not remain in this stable much longer. For some reason, the manager could not stand him, and he made sure that the horse was sold. However, the carriage horse had done his work. From then on, the horses did not patiently accept the way they were treated. If the fodder was poor or if they had to work too hard, they refused to be harnessed the next day. In the end, the men had to adjust themselves and give the horses fair

wages for their work. The young horses who came from this stable and were sent to others explained to their new brothers what they had experienced so that these new brothers became more aware of the power they possessed. However, all this consciousness raising went very slowly with the oxen—of course, this explains why oxen are so stubborn.

11 ■ The Collaborator (1924)

In the Orient, where the sun shines brighter and flowers and fruit flourish more amply, there once lived a powerful prince. He was cruel, and there was nothing that could satisfy his greed—not the stuffed treasure chambers, not the lush fields, not the marble palaces, not the numerous splendid horses and camels that filled his stables. His subjects had a very hard life. They had to slave away so much that their tongues hung out of their mouths like exhausted dogs, and for all their work, they received meager nourishment and lived in miserable clay huts. Consequently, a great muttering of discontent erupted among the people, and the noise of this murmuring reached the prince's palace during the night like the swelling of waves. The prince became extremely anxious, for he was a coward like all tyrants. He called for his royal sorcerer and said to him: "My life's in danger, and I must protect myself. However, I don't trust my soldiers because they are the brothers and sons of the people, who are unsatisfied. It's even possible that they would support them and not me. This is why I want to search for my collaborators in the spirit world. Call the spirits to us."

So the sorcerer drew a circle on the ground and uttered some spells. Suddenly, the large hall trembled and shook, and the windows rattled as if a violent storm had come roaring into the palace. All at once, a gigantic man appeared in the circle. His looks were terrifying. He had shaggy hair, blazing eyes, and massive fists. The



prince took some steps backward and asked the sorcerer, "Who is this?"

"This is Hate," replied the sorcerer.

And then Hate spoke: "I provoke people to fight and kill each other. Send me to your people, and I'll have a brother murder his brother, and a father, his son. I'm as strong as the sea and as hard as granite."

But the prince was cautious and asked: "Are you certain that you'll be able to teach my people to hate just each other?"

"I can't promise that," Hate replied.

"Oh, no!" the prince cried out. "If they were to learn to hate me, and your spirit was among them—that would be my death! Away with you! I don't want you for my collaborator!"

Hate disappeared, and an ancient woman appeared. She was pitiful and had a furrowed brow, a stooped back, frightened eyes, and no teeth.

"This is Poverty," the sorcerer explained.

"I am the best collaborator for you," boasted Poverty with a hoarse voice. "Wherever I go, the people there become full of fear, cringe, and are easy to tame. I leave them weak. Their faces collapse. Their hands and legs become frail and dry. Wherever I've been in the past, people don't have anything left of their lives."

"If they become weak," the prince replied as he wrinkled his forehead, "then they can't work anymore, and who knows what ideas they get in their heads, when they realize that they have nothing left of their lives. Away with you, you old hag! You're not the right one for me!"

All kinds of other spirits came, but with each one, there was the danger that their influence could work against the prince. For instance, Despair said: "The people I have touched no longer pay

attention to their own lives or other people's lives." Hunger said: "I've already led many people to rebel against their ruler." And Envy explained: "I can certainly fill the hearts of people with jealousy. However, why should the poor people envy other poor people? If the people are going to be jealous, they will be jealous of you because you live in such splendor."

Finally, the prince became furious, and he threatened the sorcerer that he would have his head cut off if he did not conjure the right spirit right away. In response, the sorcerer screamed loudly in fear and uttered a magic spell. All of a sudden, a tiny woman stood in the middle of the circle. She was neither young nor old and was dressed cleanly with straight combed hair. She gave the prince a broad smile and made a beautiful curtsy.

The prince exploded with anger and yelled, "Do you want to make a fool out of me, you despicable sorcerer? What can this tiny dumb woman do with her smiles? Send her away!"

"Oh, please your majesty," the quivering sorcerer replied, "This tiny woman is Satisfaction, and she is the most powerful among all the spirits. Please, I beg you to let her speak."

And the smiling little woman began talking: "Wherever I go, the muttering subsides. People stop thinking. They look around them and say, 'Certainly things are not going well for us, but they could be much worse. We should be happy and grateful that our misery is not much greater than it is.' And the people eat dry bread and live in holes in the ground and work like animals and are silent and submissive. The women especially let me into their hearts, and when the men want to dare something to make their lives a little better, they prevent their husbands and yammer: 'No, no, don't do it. Who knows whether your gamble will succeed? If it does not succeed, then things will perhaps become even worse for us. We

should be happy that we don't entirely starve to death and have to sleep on the mere ground!'"

The prince nodded graciously. He took the gold chain from his neck, hung it around the smiling woman's neck, and solemnly declared her to be his official collaborator.

And from then on, the prince was no longer afraid. His days were joyful, and his nights, peaceful. Clearly, there where satisfaction reigns in the hearts of people, the oppressors and exploiters can sleep peacefully. They do not have to worry about lurking danger.

12 ■ The Miraculous Wall (1924)

Many, many years ago there was a country ruled by a good old man, whom the people themselves had elected to manage their common property and goods. The country was rich, and nobody suffered from misfortune. Food, clothes, cooking utensils, everything, including toys for children, were kept in large halls open to the street so that all the people could take what they needed. They only had to write down on a piece of paper what they had taken and then throw the signed paper into a box.

Since the people of this country believed in honest good sense and were taught that prosperity and happiness of everyone meant prosperity and happiness for the individual, everyone gladly worked, and none of the people took more than what they deserved. If they had done this, even the small children would have scorned them. Meanwhile, the good old man thought day and night about how he could increase the prosperity of the people and consulted with all the wise councilors of the country.

He did this until a sad day arrived. The good old man laid himself down to die, but before he died, he called the people to his deathbed and said: "Our country is rich. You are free and happy. Now, I want you to elect people among you, men and women, who can take over the management of your goods. But make sure that greed does not creep into your hearts."

And then he died.

The people mourned seven days and seven nights for the true friend who had managed the wealth and abundance of the country. Then they prepared for the election of the new leader. When the people gathered in the large council chamber, they suddenly heard the rolling of wheels and the stomping of horses. A golden coach stopped outside the council chamber, and out sprang the good old man's son, who had been residing outside the country for the past five years. He was clothed in silk and satin, and precious stones glittered on his clothing. Hanging from his side was a sharply polished sword, which the people of this peaceful country had never seen before. An elderly man climbed out of the coach after him. He had the face of a fox, and his lean hands seemed like the claws of predator birds.

The crowd greeted the good old man's son enthusiastically because the people loved and trusted him, thanks to his father. He entered into the council chamber followed by his fox-faced companion and said: "My friend, who is the wisest man among the wise men in the faraway country that I am coming from, will now speak to you. Listen to his words because he will give you the best advice."

The fox-faced man bowed deeply before the good old man's son and said: "If you permit me, oh king, I shall speak to your people."

However, the people were astonished because it had never before heard the word "king." A young man, who was participating in the Council of Adults for the first time and was allowed to talk, called out loudly: "We are not 'his people'! How could people belong to one person?"

The fox-faced man threw the young man an angry look, while the good old man's son, whose name was Schulik, slammed his sword on the council table so hard that everyone became silent out

of fear. And now the fox-faced man began to speak. He knew exactly what clever words to use so that the audience would feel he was right in everything he had to say, even though the people did not understand him. He reported that in the country that he had come from, one person ruled over all the others, but not like the good old man had done by always consulting with the wisest councilors of the people. Instead, in that country the king alone acted according to his will, and this was right because too many cooks spoil the stew. Any ruler who lets himself be advised by many people becomes confused and won't know what to do. However, when the smartest and best man of the people rules according to his own will, then this will bring honor to everyone and benefit everyone.

The people, who were accustomed to always hearing the truth, put their trust in the words of the fox-faced man. It was only the young man who cried: "How are we to recognize the smartest and best man?"

Schulik became furious, but the fox-faced man bowed deeply before Schulik and responded: "Who could be smarter and better than the son of the good old man whom you all had elected? This is also the case in my country, where the son follows the father."

He talked more and spoke long and cunningly until the confused people elected Schulik to the position of ruler. Then the son took the stage and promised the people that he would create paradise on earth, and after saying this, the council was adjourned.

Schulik was not only domineering but also extremely greedy. It angered him that everyone else could possess just as much as he could. When he saw how the people took what they needed from the open halls, he became enraged and screamed: "Why am I king when my subjects are allowed to possess just as much as I have?"

He consulted with his fox-faced friend, who said: "Don't despair, my master. All these things and more that you desire will belong to you from now on and to your selected friends. We shall build a wall around everything so that the hands of the common people can no longer reach them."

"That won't work," Schulik contradicted him and grumbled. "The open halls of my country are famous in the entire world. All the tourists who see the stored-up wealth return to their country and talk about the prosperity of my country. If we hide the wealth, it will then mean: 'Schulik reigns over a poor country. He is a beggar king.'"

"We won't conceal the wealth," the fox-faced man replied with a sly smile. "Let me take care of this."

Then he went to the large tower that Schulik had provided for his residence. For three days and three nights, a thick yellow smoke emanated from the high tower. The fox-faced man stood before an enormous kettle and mixed and cooked strange things into a mass. Then he brought in some foreigners from his former country, and they worked the entire night in the city.

The following morning, a mother spoke to her little daughter: "My child, your shoes are torn. When you walk to school, the rain will make them wet, and you'll become sick. Go to the shoe hall near the fountain and take a pair of small boots. Then write my name on the piece of paper."

The little girl did as she was told. She ran to the shoe hall, looked about for a pair of beautiful little boots, and reached for them with her hand. However, what happened? Her hand did not grab hold of the boots. Instead, they slammed against a firm cold mass. The little girl thought she was dreaming. She saw the boots in front of her, but when she reached out to grab them, she con-

tinued to touch the cold mass and could not reach the boots. Horrified and weeping, she ran home and reported to her mother what had happened.

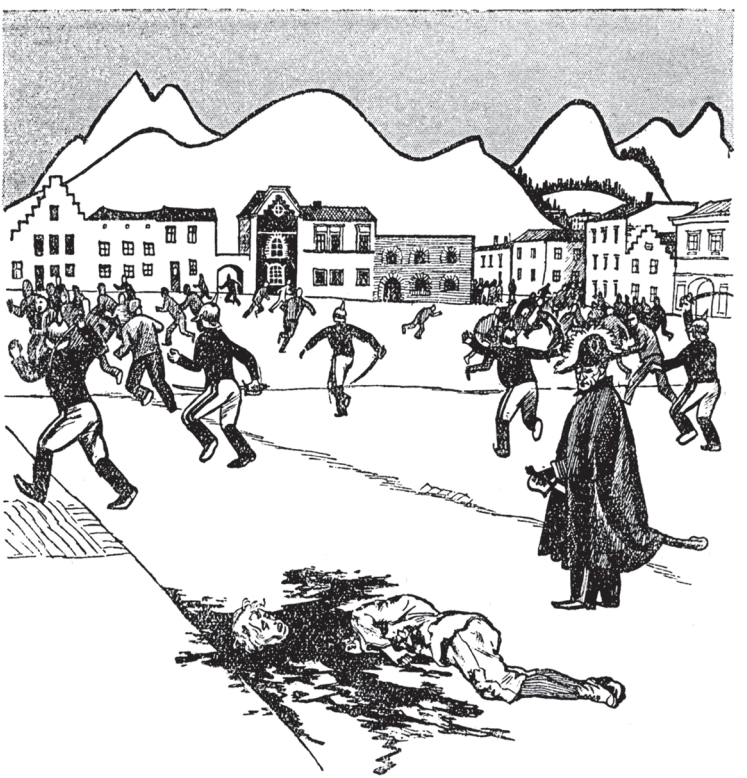
From then on, all the women and men who wanted to fetch some goods from the halls experienced the same thing. In the evening, Schulik ordered all the people to gather together on the large city square and spoke to them this way:

"My underlings, everything has gone much too well for you until today. You have not worked very much and yet lived well. This spoils the character of people. As your king, I have been concerned about healing your souls, and since I know that the suffering of the soul is beneficial, my mercy will have its source in suffering. From now on, the open halls will be protected by a miraculous wall that is indestructible. Each one of you will receive a paper bill for your work, and you will be able to obtain wares from the halls with this bill. One ware will cost one bill, the other will cost ten. This way the prosperity of the country will grow without the harm that has been done to your souls up to now through too much happiness."

The people remained silent, for next to Schulik stood the band of foreigners with drawn swords, and the people did not have any weapons. Only the young man who had already raised his voice at the council meeting cried out: "How can you determine how many bills our work is worth and how many bills the merchandise is worth?"

In reply, Schulik bellowed: "The merchandise is mine. The power is mine. I decide what I want!"

Then he gave a signal to the foreigners with the swords, and they attacked the courageous young man and cut off his head with their swords.



At first, Schulik was so happy about the miraculous wall that he did not think about demanding many bills for the merchandise. But then the fox-faced man taught him that he could obtain gold for the merchandise from the less productive and less industrious neighboring countries. So now, Schulik began to export the wares to the neighboring countries, and he demanded five times or ten times more for those wares that he sold in his country. The workers did not receive higher wages, and so the people had to work themselves to death just to be able earn the necessary bills to live.

In earlier days, the women, who had to take care of children, stayed home and still received everything they needed because the good old man, who had been chosen by the people, had said: "Whoever raises children works for the future. This work is so important and valuable that it cannot be rewarded enough." However, now more than one woman said to her husband: "If I also earn ten bills every week, then the children will not have to run around in their bare feet. So I'll go and work as well."

The large number of women who went to work terrified Schulik. If the people bought more merchandise, then he couldn't send so much to the neighboring countries. Consequently, he ordered that women be paid half of what men received for the same work, and later he ordered that children would be allowed to work but would only be paid a fourth of what men received for the same work. In addition, to be completely certain of his plan, Schulik raised the price of goods every month seven times their worth.

Now, the tourists who visited the country could truly write home: "Schulik reigns over a people of beggars." Indeed, the people were all ragged and despondent and walked around with hollow

eyes and cheeks and emaciated legs. Soon, few tourists visited the country. Instead, more businessmen and kings came. The businessmen saw the overflowing halls of merchandise, and the kings visited the glorious palace in which Schulik lived.

The most dreadful thing that the poor people had to endure was the miraculous wall. Hungry people saw delicious food within reach; freezing people, magnificent fur coats; sick people, whose dried out bodies had to lie on rotten straw, clean white beds; and the children pressed their faces on the miraculous wall behind which toys were spread out, and their tears streamed down their cheeks out of longing and sorrow.

Schulik heaped the gold that he received from neighboring countries in the cellars of his palace. He was now so distinguished that he spoke with only a select few. Moreover, he had married the daughter of a nearby king, and when she gave birth to a son, he declared that his son would be the next king.

Everything became worse and worse for the people. The people starved, and they were mocked by the increase of all the exquisite things behind the miraculous wall. Yet, nobody dared to touch the miraculous wall because of some men dressed in white with long beards who came from a neighboring country. Once a week they spoke to the people and explained that the miraculous wall was the holiest in the world. Whoever damaged it would be damned for all eternity. The poor people who were already living in hell on earth were afraid of a second hell in the next world, and therefore, only their looks touched the miraculous wall from afar.

Schulik had recruited some other foreigners. They wore long black gowns and black berets and spoke once a month to the people and declared the miraculous wall holy. Whoever damaged it would be considered a criminal and would be hung on the gallows to pay

the price for his crime. Then they would point to the black gallows that Schulik had built in the marketplace.

However, neither the threats of the men dressed in white nor those of the men dressed in black would have succeeded if the people had not firmly believed that the miraculous wall that separated them from everything could not be destroyed. And the people also thought that this is why some were hung and some damned to live in hell when everything was in vain on earth. And so they starved and worked, and the small children died in misery just like flowers smattered by hail.

Now, one day, a group of small children went to the large hall filled with groceries. They looked at the food with such hungry eyes that it seemed their yearning looks would have drawn the food to them. Just then, Schulik happened to drive by the hall in his golden coach. Next to him sat the fox-faced man, who held the highest official position in the country, and he pointed to the children and laughed.

"Look," he said, "just look at what a good job the miraculous wall has done for you!"

And Schulik also laughed.

Now, the children had been playing in a quarry before this, and the smallest child had taken a beautiful round stone with him and was sucking on it to still his hunger. When Schulik and the fox-faced man laughed about the starving children, something strange happened. The stone sprung from the mouth of the little boy, rolled to the feet of the biggest boy, and began to speak: "There, where the people are harder and more wicked than stones, a heart awakes in the stones to help the people living in misery. I want to save all of you. Pick me up in your hand, my boy, and fling me against the miraculous wall."

The stone had shouted very loudly, and a group of men who had just come from their work, stopped and warned the boy: "Don't do it. Otherwise, you'll be lost."

However, the boy already had the stone in his hand and flung it with all his might against the miraculous wall.

All at once, the wall crumbled, and a great noise resounded everywhere. The miraculous wall was smashed to pieces, and bread, sausages, and all kinds of delicacies rolled before the feet of the hungry children. When the people saw that the miraculous wall that had separated everything that they had needed from them could be destroyed by a common stone, they rejoiced.

Then, on that very same day, all the miraculous walls separating the people from the goods in all the halls were smashed. The starving people ate until they were content. The people in rags clothed themselves. The sick people were brought to clean white beds.

The people were once more their own masters. The swindlers dressed in black and white robes fled. But Schulik and the fox-faced man, whose greed had caused all the misfortune, were taken to the marketplace and hung on the gallows that had been built for the people.

13 ■ The Monkeys and the Whip (1924)

After a long stay in the world of humans, a monkey returned to his home in the jungle. Among the different things that he brought home with him was above all a whip with a long handle that he had stolen in the world of humans.

By means of this whip, he compelled all the monkeys of the jungle to do his will: they had to pluck nuts for him, fill his cupboards, fetch hay for his bed, provide him with water, protect him from strange monkeys from the neighboring jungles who wanted to invade his place, and pick the fleas from his body. They had to do all this while he lazily sat on a branch, or took pleasure with one of the beautiful female monkeys. If the monkeys did not carry out his commands, he would hit them mercilessly with the whip, and it caused so much pain that they did not dare to oppose him.

He became more and more nasty and demanding so that the poor monkeys no longer found time to pluck nuts for themselves, and in the evening, they were all tired to death and sank down on the moss with empty stomachs. Great harm and sorrow prevailed in the jungle, and many of the younger monkeys departed.

"If only he didn't have this terrible magic wand!" a very exhausted monkey complained to this wife one evening. "When he touches us with it, we feel such a horrible, burning pain that we must obey him."

"But he doesn't feel any pain at all when he touches the magic

wand," remarked the monkey's wife, who was much smarter than her husband was.

"You're right. I have often wondered why that is."

His wife thought for a while, and then she said, "Is it possible that he doesn't feel any pain because he always holds the handle of the magic wand in his hand?"

This view of the clever monkey's wife gradually spread among the tormented monkeys, and one day when they could no longer tolerate the pain and agony, they tore the whip away from their master, held the handle tightly, and let the cord of the whip dance on his back.

That was the end of his glorious days. The monkeys could once again gather nuts for themselves and lead a pleasant and free life. Nobody could force them to do something against their will anymore.

From then on, the young monkeys of this jungle learned in the monkey school that the first and highest principle of wisdom was: "Everything depends above all on whether you hold the whip on the correct end."

14 ■ The Fence (1924)

Once upon a time there was a large island in the middle of a mighty, turbulent blue sea. The soil of this island was extremely fertile, so everything grew as if by itself. The people had no worries, nor did they suffer. They lived from the fruits of the earth that seemed to fall into their laps. They owned all sorts of domestic animals: cows, which gave them milk; sheep, which gave them wool; and chickens, which gave them eggs. Everything was the common property of everyone else, so nobody suffered from need or neglect.

Each inhabitant of the island owned a small cottage. Whenever food or clothing was needed, one went to the animal stalls or to the large hall on the seashore where the women spun, wove, and worked. Each person had only to go there, show some worn or torn clothing, and say, "I need some new clothes," and they were delivered on the spot. If a person had helped tend the animals, fed them, and cut their wool, he or she had a right to their wool.

The people lived very happily on their splendid island, and life was a daily festival, especially for the children. Among the inhabitants of the island, there were good and evil people, generous and greedy people, like everywhere. Among the greedy people, there was a small, hunchbacked man by the name of Grabit. He was particularly annoyed because all of the other people were just as rich as he was and because he had to help till the common fields and tend the

animals just like everyone else. For a long time, he thought of a way in which he could begin to change this situation, and finally it seemed as though he had worked out a plan, because he became happy and cheerful, and his face, which had always been sullen, took on a bright expression.

All of the people had small gardens around their cottages. Depending on their taste, they planted vegetables or flowers, and anyone who planted vegetables was allowed to take flowers from the neighbor's garden to decorate his cottage. In return, the other person fetched vegetables from his neighbor's garden.

One day, Grabit went into the forest and chopped some wood, which he dragged home. He worked all night beneath the moon, and in the morning, there was a high fence around his garden with a small door that could be locked from the inside. When the islanders caught sight of the fence, they were astonished and stopped in their tracks. They had never seen such a thing before, and they did not understand its purpose.

"A strange decoration," one man stated. "I think it looks really ugly."

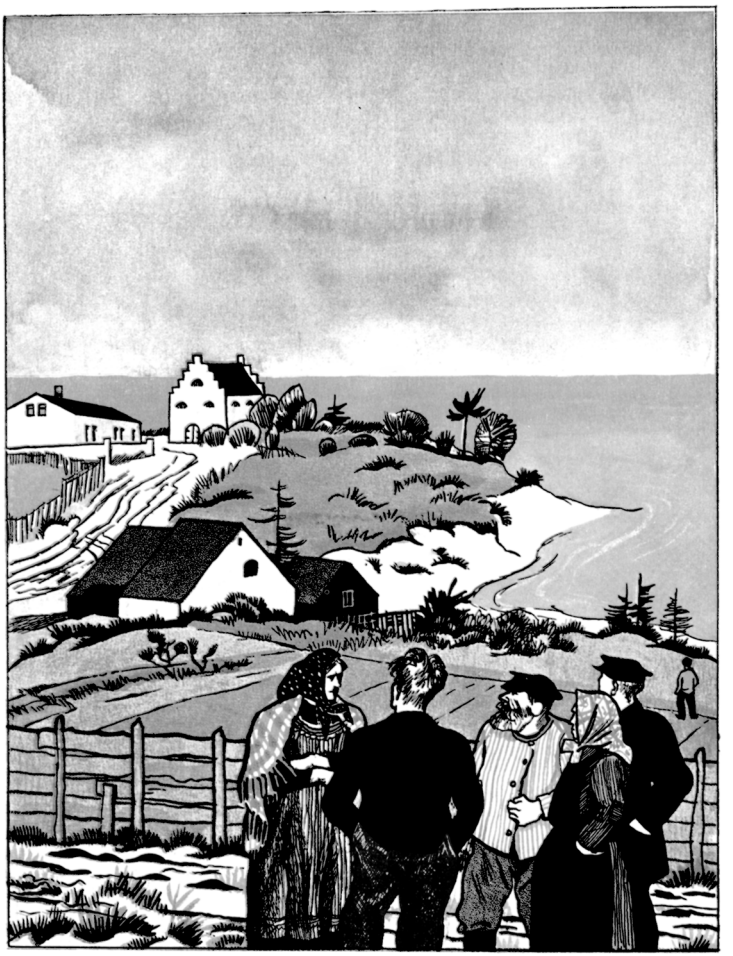
"No," a woman declared. "I like it. It's so orderly."

Some laughed while others stood and admired the artful door. However, nobody had an inkling what the whole thing meant.

Grabit had a friend, the strongest, biggest, and also the stupidest man on the island, a stocky fellow who could not think for himself and who believed everything he was told. One day, Grabit summoned this man to him and asked, "Do you want to become richer and happier than anyone else?"

The blockhead nodded. "Why not, if it won't exhaust me."

Not only was he stupid, but he was also very lazy.



"It won't be especially troublesome for you," the sly Grabit said. "You only have to say that I'm right, no matter what I do, and if anyone attacks me, you must protect me."

"I'll gladly do that." The blockhead laughed, for he thought to himself, "Nobody on our island attacks anyone else. I won't have to exhaust myself with much protection."

Grabit took a large, sharp knife from a hiding place and gave it to the blockhead. "I want you to carry this with you constantly, and if I call you, I want you to come and protect me with this weapon."

The following night, Grabit went to the animal stalls and hen yards of the community. He took two cows and twelve hens and drove them into his garden behind the fence. When the islanders passed by Grabit's garden the next morning and saw the animals behind the fence, they laughed because they believed it was all a joke. However, when the time came for the women to fetch milk for their children, they did not have enough because the milk of the two cows that Grabit had driven into his garden was missing. Therefore, the women went to the fence and cried out, "Grabit, let us in. We want to milk the cows."

However, Grabit stood behind the closed door and yelled to the women, "What's the idea? Don't you see that the cows are in my garden? Whatever is in my garden behind the fence belongs to me, and you're not allowed to touch it."

The women thought that Grabit had lost his mind, and they called their men to help them. However, Grabit said the same thing to them, and he added, "Two nights ago an angel descended from heaven and said to me, 'Grabit, whatever lies behind your fence is your property, and property is holy. Whoever dares to touch your property must die.' Therefore, take care and keep away from my

cows and chickens; otherwise, heaven will punish you. And there's more I want to show you!" With these words, he shoved the blockhead into the open. "This man is carrying a sharp knife, and he will kill anyone who touches my property."

Since the islanders really believed that an angel had descended from heaven, they became sad, and they also feared the sharp knife and powerful fists of the blockhead. So they lowered their heads and trudged despondently toward their homes. Only a few women, whose children had not received milk, remained and complained loudly in front of the fence, "Grabit, our children are crying for milk. What should we do?"

"I'm a good man," Grabit answered, "and I'm concerned about your innocent children. Still, property is holy, and, if I were to give you the milk from my cows for nothing, that would ruin their holiness. Work a few hours longer each day and bring me some beautiful clothes; then I'll give you milk in exchange."

Since the women had no other way to obtain the milk, they obeyed. From then on, there was more than one occasion when the islanders awoke and saw another new fence around another garden, and behind the fence there would be cows, chickens, and sheep. And each time, the man who built the fence explained that an angel had also come to him and had spoken the same words he had spoken to Grabit. And each time, one of the men hired one of the eleven brothers of the blockhead, gave him a large sharp knife, and ordered him to protect his property.

Ultimately, everything on the island belonged to just twelve men, who lived in great harmony with one another and enjoyed comfortable lives. The rest of the islanders had to work for them and received only half of what they used to earn. The twelve men commanded the twelve blockheads to build a stone house with iron

bars, and all of those who tried to take something from the property of the twelve men were imprisoned there.

Now, there was misery and sadness on the island, and when the people passed Grabit's fence, they clenched their fists and muttered, "Cursed fence, everything has turned against us since you came. If we had only torn you down the first day we saw you!" But they said this softly, for the blockheads stood on watch, and each word said against Grabit and his friends was punished severely.

The blockheads received all they wanted to eat and wore green clothes, which were more beautiful than those worn by the other islanders. Soon many men who could no longer bear looking at their starving children sold themselves to the twelve rich men, joined the ranks of the blockheads, and fought against their brothers.

Actually, the islanders would not have tolerated the rule of the twelve men if they had not really believed that an angel had come from heaven and declared that property was holy. The twelve men also wrote a thick book of commandments that dealt largely with the holiness of property. Whoever did not follow the commandments was severely punished.

That was the way things were, and they became worse and worse. Then one day, a ship arrived from another island, where fences, holy property, and blockheads with sharp knives did not exist. The strangers came ashore, and since they were friendly people, the islanders told them about their misery.

"Why don't you defend yourselves?" the strangers asked.

"An angel brought the holy law," the islanders explained and looked shyly to see if the strangers understood their problem. The strangers laughed so loudly that their laughter sounded like thunder, and all of the fences on the island began to tremble. Then

they declared, "You fools, don't you realize that Grabit and his eleven friends are thieves? They've stolen what belonged to all of you, and they've protected their stolen goods with fences. Their holy laws are the laws of crooks, and the blockheads who protect the stolen goods are also plain crooks. Come with us. We'll help you recover what they've stolen from you."

Now, it dawned on the islanders how blind they had been. The men ran to fetch their hoes and axes. The strangers took out their knives. Soon, the fences were smashed and torn to the ground on the entire island. Eleven of the rich men became so horrified that they returned the stolen goods and promised to work again and to stop stealing. Grabit, however, defended himself and was killed by the strangers. The blockheads ran away and hid in the forest.

When the strangers sailed homeward on their ships, they left behind them a happy and cheerful island where hunger and misery no longer existed and where it became impossible for a thief to use sly lies to make himself into a ruler over others.

15 ■ The Red Flag (1930)

The large ship filled with refugees sailed over the sea. It carried members of the most different countries on earth—blond, blue-eyed people, who had spent half their lives in the northern regions, where frost and cold weather rule the area; and also dark-colored people with black eyes, who came from more fortunate countries where the sun reigns. One like the other, they were all driven by misery and need from their homeland and held out hope to be able to spend their lives in another part of the world.

The refugees were packed together tightly in the bilge of the ship. One would have believed that such close neighbors bound together by the same suffering and the same longing would have made friends with one another and would have supported one another as good brothers. But this was not the case. All those refugees who spoke the same language congregated together and gave the others suspicious, if not hostile, looks. They had been taught in school that people who lived beyond the border of their country and spoke another language were enemies. Moreover, they had learned all this not only in school as children but also later. The newspapers and politicians shouted the same ideas into their ears constantly, even when they had become adults. Of course, the more intelligent individuals among them sometimes had doubts, especially when they saw how they were oppressed and exploited by their own people, but they were so exhausted from hard work

and perpetually worried about earning a living that they could barely think about all this. Consequently, everything remained just as it was.

As the ship reached the southern waters, the sky suddenly became dark. The sea became black. The white seagulls soared screeching through the air and a terrible storm erupted. The waves thundered against the ship and rushed like a waterfall over the deck. The storm shattered the strong masts as if they had been wooden matches. The ship's engine faltered. The helm broke. For twenty-four hours, the ship was lifted and driven by the waves high into the air toward heaven and then down into the dark depths of the raging sea. The women and children wept out of fear. The men looked angrily at the gushing flood of water. At home, they had suffered from slow starvation, and now here, when they had hoped to escape starvation, they were faced with death by drowning in the waves. Such was their life. They lamented about this to one another in their language, but the people from the other countries did not understand one another.

A young blond boy by the name of Peter was flung against the railing by the horrendous storm. He grabbed hold of it and feared he would be washed away by the waves at any moment.

"Help! Help!" he shouted, but the storm had whisked him from his family and friends, and he found himself near the strangers, the enemies, as his parents had called them. "They won't help me," Peter thought to himself. "All's lost," and he shut his eyes.

Then, all of a sudden, he felt two warm hands grabbing his hands, which had become ice-cold, and they were pulling him slowly and safely from the railing. Afterward, the two arms embraced him and held him tightly.

Peter opened his eyes and recognized Beppo, one of the older

boys who belonged to the "enemies." Peter tried to thank him, but Beppo only smiled so that his white teeth sparkled in his dark face and explained through gestures that he could not understand Peter's words. In the meantime, some grownups confronted Beppo and scolded him because he had risked his life to save a stranger. However, Beppo just chuckled and shrugged his shoulders. He held Peter tightly and carried him over the swaying deck to his parents. Then he shook the boy's hand, and when the blue and black eyes encountered each other at their separation, dark hints of friendship awoke in each other and a feeling of solidarity. The looks that they exchanged were a silent language that both of them understood.

During the night, the ship became stranded on a rocky island. Many of the passengers drowned. The rest of them were carried by the waves onto the land, where they lay unconscious on the sand. Their arms and legs hurt badly, and fear and despair were in their hearts.

As the gray morning dawned, some strange armed creatures dressed in green clothes appeared. They ran up and down the beach screaming at the exhausted shipwrecked people and tied them up, men and women, even the children. The green creatures were careful to keep the people who spoke the same language together in groups.

Peter and the people in his group were the first to move ahead and were beaten by clubs. He wept bitter tears, for the cruel sea had devoured his sister. When he trudged by the second group of black-haired people, Beppo, who had also been shackled, raised his head and yelled something to him. Of course, Peter did not understand his words, but he felt that his helper had said something kind and comforting to him, and he smiled. The green creature who

stood next to Beppo seemed angry about this, because his club pounded Beppo's shoulders.

The shipwrecked people were brought to the interior of the island. They quickly realized that they had exchanged the need and misery of their homeland for even greater misery and bitter conditions. A dreadful monster ruled the island. He had a hundred eyes and a thousand arms, which he could expand as he wished. A great clump of gold sat at the place where his heart was supposed to be. The monster's legs were so long that he could cover many miles with one step. His feet were so huge and heavy that he trampled any living thing beneath them. The green creatures were his servants.

The monster was very happy about the shipwreck. For some time now, he had lacked slaves to do the work on the island. There were frequently shipwrecks in this region of the world, and those people who were rescued were always turned into slaves by the monster. There were about one hundred slaves remaining from the last shipwreck, but unfortunately, these people spoke another language and could not communicate with the new shipwrecked people. The monster himself spoke every language in the world, and the green creatures talked only with clubs, which everyone could understand.

The monster ordered the shipwrecked people to get into groups according to their country and language. Then they were counted, and it turned out that the fierce sea had spared a hundred people each from four different countries, largely men and women. The children were not counted.

The monster laughed. "A good catch! The sea hadn't washed ashore such a rich booty for many years. Now the machines on the island will once again begin to hum, and there will be thumping

and hammering in the mines. The fields will once again be plowed and harrowed. My wealth, which had already been dwindling, will start growing again. Fortunately, these people are used to starving. You can see this from their faces. So I won't have to spend much on food for them."

The monster piously joined his hands in prayer and looked up toward heaven: "Praise be the kind God who let the ship sink!"

Then he cast his gaze at the leader of the green creatures and noticed that he was not very happy.

"Why are you looking so horrified and distressed?" he barked at him. "My joy, that is, your master's joy should also be yours. Do you dare to sympathize with the slaves, you miserable dog?"

The leader of the green creatures laughed aloud. His laugher sounded like the cawing of crows.

"Sympathy," he was taken by surprise and cried, "What is that? I know only two words, my lord. Obedience to you and the club for the slaves, but . . ." He became silent.

"You seem to know a third word, servant," the monster sneered. "Out with it; otherwise, you'll join the ranks of the slaves."

The leader of the green creatures moved closer to the monster and whispered, "The booty that the sea has washed on to the shore, my lord, is much too rich. Please consider that we, your servants, are only a hundred men strong. The number of the shipwrecked comes to four hundred. In addition, there are another hundred old slaves. What will happen if they rise up against us? They could easily overpower us."

Once again, the monster laughed, and this time he was so loud that the windows of the room shattered into pieces.

"You fool!" the monster screamed. "You inexperienced fool! You

are not one hundred against five hundred, but five hundred against one hundred."

"I am not sure that I understand, my lord," spoke the leader of the green creatures.

"Don't you see that there are a hundred that belong to one group of people and one particular language? Each one of the hundred people in a group considers the other four groups of one hundred their enemies and will take your side against them. We need only to make sure that they continue to remain caught up in this delusion. This is why we must put them up in four different parts of the city, and I shall give each group their own flag. That will delight each group and will strengthen their national consciousness. When you lead the slaves to their work, make sure that a boy with the relevant flag marches ahead of the troop. Above all, make sure that the people never learn the language of their 'enemies.'"

The leader of the green creatures bowed deeply and went off to carry out the commands of his master. So now, a terrible life began for the slaves. Every morning at dawn, they were driven out of their shabby shacks to work and were allowed to return only late in the evening. They all had to work hard for the monster, even the women and children, not just the men. As salary, they received some meager food that was barely enough to keep themselves alive.

As they worked, the men of the different groups came together, but the green creatures took great care to prevent them from communicating with one another in any way. Once a week, a church service was held in the five different parts of the city, and each slave was compelled to attend it. One of the monster's servants usually preached from the pulpit and declared in the particular language of the people gathered there that they were the best in the world,

while the other groups of people were murderers and thieves and their most bitter enemies whom they had to fight. Consequently, the poor people, who had been made dumb from much too much drudgery, believed these mendacious words. That is, with the exception of Beppo and Peter.

Little blond Peter thought constantly about how Beppo had rescued him and had placed his own life in danger, and Beppo with his black eyes and black hair recalled that he had not glimpsed the enemy in Peter's desperate eyes. Instead, he saw a comrade whom he had to help. The two of them worked in the same factory and exchanged handshakes and friendly looks so long as it was possible. This always relieved their heavy hearts.

Yet, there was very little relief in Peter's group. In the late hours of the night, in the quarters that they inhabited, the men grumbled about their fate.

"But what can we do?" Peter's father sighed. "We are a hundred against five hundred. It's clear that our enemies will take the monster's side and support the green creatures if we rebel."

"I'm not so sure," Peter contradicted him. "Beppo and his friends would certainly fight with us against the monster. Couldn't we just communicate with them?"

"Be quiet, you dumb fool!" the adults shouted him down. "Those other people are our enemies. You don't understand!"

Meanwhile, in all four quarters of the city and also in the middle, where the slaves lived, voices resounded and spoke the same words almost every evening: "We can't stand this dog's life any longer. We must take up the fight against the monster. But what can we do? We're a hundred against five hundred."

Yet, nothing was done, and many hard and sad years passed away. Beppo and Peter were now grown up. They still felt friendly

toward one another, but they were not allowed to come together, and neither one was able to learn the language that the other spoke. They worked in the same factory with their fathers and mothers. One day, when the blazing sun cast its rays down into the hall, the wheels of the machines hummed and roared. The belts swung and whistled in the air. Meanwhile, Peter swayed in the terrible heat. He became dizzy, staggered forward, and came very close to the horrendous belts that seemed to grab furiously for his head.

Once again, just like the time when the waves had threatened to devour him, death appeared and awaited him. And just like the time before, two brown arms grabbed hold of him and tore him back to life. Beppo had seen the danger from the other side of the hall and had rushed to help his friend. This did not surprise Peter, but what did astonish him is that three young men from the three other different groups working in the hall came rushing to his aid. Like scales falling from his eyes, he realized: "They're not enemies at all."

Of course, they did not understand each other, but when Peter held out his hand to shake their hands, they responded in kind. So now, the five young men stood there like a five-pointed star. They couldn't exchange a word with each other, and yet they understood that they belonged to one another.

All around the hall, the slaves watched this strange drama in astonishment, and also the leader of the green creatures noticed what was happening. Immediately, he became enraged, and fear filled his soul. "If the slaves are able to communicate among themselves," he thought, "then we are lost. The monster's empire will collapse, and the slaves will become the masters."

Quickly, the leader of the green creatures called to a crew of his servants, and they approached the five young men.

"Break it up, you fools!" he bellowed.

However, the five young men stood there quietly, holding hands.

Once more, the leader of the green creatures commanded them to separate and return to their places. It was, however, all in vain. Then he gave the order to his men: "Fire!"

Five shots rang out, and five young men fell to the ground dead. Strangely, however, even in death, they kept holding each other's hands, and it was difficult for the green creatures to release their fingers from one another.

Meanwhile, the women and girls came running to the spot, weeping loudly. They dipped some cloths in the red blood of their sons and brothers to stop the bleeding. Then the slaves were forced to return to the four quarters and the middle of the city where they lived. They carried their dead with them, and as they marched, a young boy swung the flag of his particular group in front of the line of mourners. At the same time, five women took a white cloth soaked in the blood of the dead, and each concealed it beneath her dress. The cloths were bright red, and it seemed to the women as if the red cloths were the real flags that they were to follow, not those colorful flags carried up front by the boys.

After they returned to their dwellings, the five women wept bitter tears and covered the faces of their dead sons with the cloths soaked in blood. However, the fifth, Peter's mother, grieved so much that she abandoned caution.

"Everyone should know that the monster's servants murdered my son," she said as she tied the red cloth on a stick and hung it out of a window overlooking the street.

All the men who walked by it took off their caps and saluted the red flag, colored by the blood of their people. When Peter's mother saw this, she went out on the street, stood beneath the red flag, and

waited. More and more people came and crowded around her. They came from all four quarters of the city. The green creatures were not able to restrain them any longer. A sea of people flooded the square. High above them the flag fluttered blood red and was illuminated by the moon. In addition, the five different groups shouted in their own language: "This is our flag. The blood of our sons has made it red, and we shall follow it."

Then Peter's mother stood up and cried out in her own language: "It is *our* flag, brothers, turned red from the blood of *our* sons. Do you understand the words that our dead sons are speaking to us? Stick together, we must unite and fight against our common enemy! United we shall stand and be victorious!"

As the red flag fluttered over the heads of the people, they understood the woman's words. Not only that, all of a sudden, each one understood the language of the other and realized that they were all brothers and sisters. They understood that they all had only one enemy—the monster and his green servants. Now it became clear to them that they were powerful if they remained united, more powerful than their enemy, and could not be defeated.

That night, they consulted with one another, and after it started to become light in the east, all five groups returned to the part of the city in which they lived. Later that morning, they set out from the different parts of the city. Each group was led by a boy carrying the red flag, and the old colored flag was torn to pieces. Once they encountered the monster, they killed him and most of his servants. Some of the servants fled in horror in small boats on the sea.

Later, the former slaves, who became the masters of the factories and the island, succeeded in building a large ship and returned to their home countries. They carried the red flag and boldly planted

it in all their homelands. Afterward, a miracle occurred throughout all the countries—the people who rallied around the red flag were able to understand one another even when they spoke different languages, and they gradually merged and formed a powerful army with courage and determination that took up the battle against the exploitative and oppressive monsters of the world.

If you put your ear to the ground, you will then hear a mighty rumbling of millions upon millions of marching steps. This is the oncoming army, the army of those people who have been deprived of their rights and have been exploited. Their soldiers speak in all kinds of different languages and yet understand one another. They are the victorious army of the future, and the red flag flutters above their heads.

16 ■ The Crown of the King of Domnonée (1944)

A very long time ago, the Parish of Gael, which has become a tiny village, was the capital of the kingdom of Domnonée. The immense forest that divides Brittany in two parts came right up to the town. Wild animals, witches, and warlocks lived in the forest, and also here and there a holy man who had become a hermit.

The king of Domnonée, Judhael, was a good and wise man who loved his people and tried to make them happy. Everything would have been lovely had not the animals in the kingdom suffered so much from rabies and bitten men and women, who went mad or died. The king called all the wise men together and asked them what to do, but even the wise men did not know it. So the people went on going mad and dying.

The king prayed to God to help his people, and one day a shabby old man came to the palace and asked to see the king. Now, the king never minded how poor and shabby a man was—on the contrary, he was fonder of poor people than of rich—so he asked the poor man in, made him welcome, gave him something to eat, and wanted to know if he could help him. The poor man said, "I am a hermit and I want to build a monastery in your kingdom, where my brothers and I can live and nurse the sick and teach the children."

The king not only gave the hermit a large piece of land but also promised to let him have workmen to build the monastery. The

hermit, whose name was Méen, was grateful for the king's kindness, and said, "You have given me something. Now I should like to give you something. Tell me, O King, what you want most of all?"

Judhael answered, "I want to cure the poor people who have been bitten by mad animals and have gone mad, too."

The hermit asked the king to come to the forest with him, and here he touched the earth with his crook. A spring bubbled up, and all the poor mad people who drank of it were cured at once. The king thanked the hermit and then returned home.

The people of Domnonée might have been perfectly happy now, but from the German coast there came wild and barbaric tribes who invaded their country. The women and children fled to the hills and forests, and the king and his soldiers marched against the enemies. At last, the men of Domnonée beat them, but in the great battle the king lost his crown. He was very sad, because he had inherited the crown from his father and it was very precious, being made of pure gold and diamonds. So the king called his three sons and said to them, "Go, my sons, and try to find my crown. The one who finds it shall be king of Domnonée after my death."

The sons set out at once. Having reached the forest, the two elder ones hid behind trees, so that the youngest, who was still a boy, could not find them and ran about calling them. The two elder brothers, who were full of ugly envy and jealousy, laughed wickedly and said, "Let Judicael look for us as long as he likes. He's always been luckier than we are. Besides, he's father's favorite and I'm sure father is hoping that he will find the crown. Let's leave him alone in the forest. Perhaps the wolves will eat him. We'll go straight to the battlefield."

Poor Judicael looked for his brothers till he could hardly walk any longer and he was hoarse from calling his wicked brothers'

names. The sun had set, it was very dark in the forest, and Judicael heard the wolves howling. Tired and frightened, he sank to the ground under a big tree and began to cry. He did not know that Méen's monastery was quite close by.

The hermit came into the forest to pick a few berries for his supper, and hearing someone crying, he ran to the place the sobs came from and at once recognized the king's youngest son. He asked him kindly what was the matter, and Judicael told him everything.

"Never mind, my son," said the hermit. "You have always been a good and brave boy. Therefore, God has sent me to help you. I am going to give you something that will help you to find your father's crown."

He went back to his hut and returned with a hazel rod, which he gave to the boy.

"If you don't know which way to go," he said, "put the rod on the ground. The thin end will turn the way you must go to the crown. When you have walked for some time, you will see a big stone, and under the stone lies a dead warrior holding the crown in his hands."

The boy thanked the hermit, took the rod, and went on. The rod led him straight to the battlefield. He saw many dead warriors and grew sad thinking that they might have been alive still had not the wild and barbarous enemies invaded the kingdom of Domnonée. He knelt down and asked God to make an end of all wars. Getting up from his knees, he did not know which way to turn and laid the rod on the ground. At once, the thin end turned toward a big stone at the other end of the field. Judicael crossed the field, and on reaching the stone he saw a gigantic dead warrior holding the crown in his hands. The boy took the crown and hurried away from the terrible battlefield.

Walking on, he thought of his father's joy when he would give him back the crown. Unfortunately, he had left the rod on the battlefield and lost his way. As night had come, he lay down on a soft patch of heather and fell asleep. In the morning, the birds woke him with their merry songs. He got up, shook the dewdrops from his clothes and his hair, and after looking in vain for some time at last found the path leading home. While he was walking along, he heard voices behind his back and suddenly he heard his brothers calling him. He was glad to see them again and ran toward them holding out the crown so that they should see it at once. The two wicked brothers grew pale with anger. They looked at each other and the same dreadful idea flashed through both their brains. Without a word, they rushed at Judicael and struck him with their heavy sticks until he died. Then they dug a grave under an oak tree and buried him. After that, they took the crown and brought it home to their father. He was very happy to have his crown back, thanked them, and asked what had become of Judicael.

"He left us as soon as we reached the forest and went on alone," the wicked brothers said.

The king grew frightened and sent out all his servants to look for the boy. When they came back without having found him, the king feared that the wolves had eaten him. He was very sad and could not forget him. Sometimes, he saw a look in the faces of his elder sons that awoke a terrible suspicion in his heart.

Five years passed, and the king was still mourning for his son. One day, he rode through the forest and met a young shepherd playing a flute made of hazel-wood. The king listened to the music and heard a strange song:

"My brothers killed me and robbed me of my father's crown.
Five years ago, they buried me in the forest."

The king called the young shepherd and asked him what strange song he was playing.

"I don't know," said the shepherd. "I found the rod on the old battlefield and made myself a flute. As soon as I come to that big oak tree over there, the flute sings that song."

The king went over to the oak tree. Beneath it, there was a small mound looking like a grave. The king stared at the mound and his heart nearly ceased beating. Hurriedly, he ordered his servants to open the grave. A cry of horror burst from his lips upon seeing his son's body. The boy looked as if he was sleeping.

Crying bitterly, the king took the boy in his arms and carried him to the hermitage. Here he called the hermit, who came running out of his hut. When he saw the dead boy, he fell to his knees and began to pray. While he was praying, his face grew as bright as the sun, and when he got up from his knees, he took out of his pocket a little box filled with a sweet-smelling ointment. Taking the boy out of his father's arms, he gently laid him on the ground and rubbed him all over with the ointment. The boy's pale face grew rosy, and his limbs began to twitch. At last, he opened his eyes and smiled at his father and the hermit. Then he got up, and after having eaten something, he rode home with the king.

The whole kingdom rejoiced, for the people had feared that the wicked sons would reign over them after the king's death. Judicael did not tell his father what his brothers had done, but they, suddenly seeing their brother alive and well, betrayed themselves. The king wanted to kill them, but Judicael implored him to spare their lives, and the king, touched by his youngest son's generosity, granted his request. When the elder brothers knew that they owed their lives to Judicael, they were terribly ashamed. They thanked their brother again and again, asked his pardon, and left the kingdom

forever. Out in the world, they tried to atone for their sin by helping all those who could not help themselves and by fighting for God and the truth.

Judicael followed his father on the throne and became a good and wise king. During his reign there were no wars, and the people of Domnonée lived in peace and friendship with their neighbors.

17 ■ The Story of the Wise Judge (1944)

In a small village high up in the mountains, there lived two farmers. One was fat and rich and proud, and the other was poor and thin and humble. The rich farmer was a bully and terribly greedy. His greatest pleasure in life was going to the law, and he kept on suing and prosecuting the poor farmer, dragging him into court year after year. As the poor farmer could not work at home, he nearly lost the little money he had. At last, the judge had had enough of it and said to the two men: "A lawsuit must not last longer than seven years. Tomorrow you two will have been worrying the life out of me for seven years. Come back once more, and the one who can tell me what is the most beautiful, the strongest, and the richest thing in the world has won."

The two men left the court looking very foolish. The rich farmer drove home and the poor one trudged up the mountain on foot. It was a lovely spring day, the snow was melting, and hundreds of tiny rivulets ran down toward the valley as fast as they could. The rich farmer drove along slowly, trying to find an answer to the judge's question. Reaching the farm, he saw the stable doors open and the oxen chewing their cud. Driving on he saw his big farmhouse and his wife, who came to meet him. He laughed and told himself that he had found the answer: the most beautiful thing in the world is my wife, the strongest things are my oxen, and I myself am the richest thing.

The poor farmer was a good man but not very clever. He thought hard all the way home but could not find an answer. If only the judge had asked him, "What is the weakest, the poorest, and the most stupid thing on earth?" he would have stood up and said: "I am, sir."

Coming home tired and sad, he was met by his only daughter, who, seeing him so full of sorrow, thought he had lost the lawsuit, and tried to console him. But when he told her about the questions he would have to answer, she only smiled and said, "Cheer up, father. I'll find the answers even if I have to keep awake all night long."

The poor farmer kissed her and went to bed. But the girl sat at her window half the night thinking hard. In the morning, she woke her father and said, "Listen, dear father. At first, I thought and thought, but I could not find an answer. At last, I was so tired that I could not think any longer. I asked God to let me find an answer and went to bed. I fell asleep and dreamt of the judge, who was very kind and helped me to find the right answers. Here they are: The most beautiful thing in the world is spring; the strongest is the earth, because it bears fruit and corn and trees and flowers; and the richest is autumn, which brings us so many gifts."

"That sounds rather nice," the poor farmer said. "I only hope I shan't forget it till I get to town."

He put on his hat, took his stick, kissed his daughter and set out.

The two farmers met in court. The rich farmer strutted up to the judge and said proudly, "I've won. Listen to my answers. The most beautiful thing on earth is my wife, the strongest things are my oxen, and I myself am the richest thing."

The judge shook his head angrily and turned to the poor farmer.

"What about you?"

The poor farmer said, "I think spring is the most beautiful, the earth, the strongest, and autumn, the richest thing in the world."

"Good," said the judge, glad that the poor farmer had won. "You can go home. The rich farmer will pay the expenses. But tell me, my friend, did you find the answers yourself, or did someone help you?"

"My daughter told me what to say, sir," said the poor farmer, feeling frightened.

However, the judge praised him for telling the truth and said, "I have been wanting for a long time to marry a clever girl. If your daughter is as good and as pretty as she is clever, I shall marry her."

"She's a very good girl, but I can't tell you whether she's pretty," said the farmer. "You must see for yourself."

"I cannot leave the court," said the judge. "And I can only marry your daughter if she comes here without touching a blade of grass and without driving or riding."

The poor farmer ran all the way home. His daughter, seeing him arriving panting and red in the face, was afraid he had lost and called out, "Were my answers wrong?"

"No. The judge wants to marry you, but when you go to town you must not touch a blade of grass, nor may you drive or ride. So I'm afraid that you will never get there."

The girl laughed. "Why, dear father, you only have to carry me," she said.

So the poor farmer carried the girl on his back all the way to town. When the judge saw the girl, he liked her so much that he married her at once. He only made her promise never to give advice to anyone who had gone to the law.

The judge and his wife were very happy, and everyone admired

her wisdom. One day, the rich farmer came to see her. He was at the law again, and as he had lost nearly all his money in the meantime, he was terribly afraid of losing the lawsuit. He begged so hard for good advice that the judge's wife felt sorry for him and told him what to do. But as soon as the judge heard what the rich farmer said, he knew that someone had advised him and began questioning him. Although the rich farmer had promised not to betray the judge's wife, he told the judge all that happened.

The judge was very angry with his wife. He scolded her and told her to leave his house forever. The poor woman kept back her tears and only said, "Grant me a last wish. Let us eat together once more and then let me take home the thing I love best in the world."

The judge granted her wish. So she cooked an excellent dinner, and into the soup she put a few drops of a sleeping draft. During the dinner, she remained silent and did not say a word. The judge, who wanted to make friends with her once more, did not know what to do and kept on eating and drinking. After dinner, he went to sleep. Then his wife got a servant to help her carry the judge to the cart her father had sent for her. She laid him gently on soft hay, and taking hold of the reins, she set out for home, taking along her husband because he was the thing she loved best in the world. After a little while, the rumbling of the cart woke the judge. At first, he could not understand what had happened, but seeing his wife driving, he suddenly knew. He felt ashamed, begged her pardon for his unkindness, and they both drove back home. He was never again angry with his wife, and she kept every promise she made him so that they lived happily ever after.

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Works by Hermynia Zur Mühlen

FAIRY TALES

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